The UNCONSCIOUS INFLUENCE

ANNA L. PARKES

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By

Mrs. Anna L. Parkes

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TO MY HUSBAND, ROBERT EDGAR PARKES,
THIS STORY, VIVIDLY PORTRAYING THE
HUMAN CHARACTER, IS AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED
BY HIS WIFE

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CHAPTER I

Edith Melton's Home

EDITH had been sitting in the twilight for a short time, thoroughly enjoying all the peace and comfort that a cozy living room could afford.

Half unconscious of all her surroundings and nestled down in a luxuriously padded chair, she was watching the fire in the grate as it threw its cheerful rays of light into the room of which she was the sole occupant.

As she sat meditating on this particular evening, many roseate dreams and new ideas kept crowding into her youthful mind; for as she had an exceptionally sweet voice, she was looking forward to the time when some day she might become famous in the musical world.

"Voice and beauty," Mr. Melton would often say to Mrs. Melton, "are enough to make many girls fickle, but we know, mother, our Edith is not one to be easily flattered and we must not at any time let her know that she is a charm for any home and one of which we can be rightfully proud."

Edith, as she sat there absorbed in deep thought, suddenly was aroused by the voice of her mother, announcing the evening meal.

It was one of those dreary, chilly, and drizzling rainy days of December, when the outside is dull and gray and the moaning and whistling of the wind fills one with a sort of melancholy feeling such as is often experienced on an early winter day.

"From all indications this promises to be a dark and blustery night," said Mr. Melton, as the family were seating themselves at the supper table.

Mrs. Melton replied that she was indeed glad that they were all indoors, and was truly thankful for all the comforts that their home afforded.

The Meltons lived on a fair sized farm in the beautiful valley of the Ohio and not far from Yorkville, a town of about three thousand inhabitants. This farm home was exceptionally attractive and picturesque and was the source of much comment from those who passed its vine clad walls. No home in all the surrounding country had more flowers, better kept lawns nor was neater in appearance than the Melton home. It was not so large and commanding as many country homes were but it had that general appearance that gave it the "home feeling" which appeals to us all.

David Melton, his wife, Edith and Guy composed this noble household.

Mr. Melton was not a rich man, nor yet was he considered a poor man by any means, as he had been very successful in raising thoroughbred hogs and was recognized as a prosperous and influential man in his community.

Edith was now a lass of almost eighteen and two years Guy's senior, and would finish her high school education at Yorkville the coming June.

She was endowed with that character of mind guided by high ideals and a strong determination of right thinking and living, which had been instilled into her mind by her parents from her early childhood. She had inherited the sweet loving disposition of her mother and the strong personality of her father which created in her a most charming type of character.

She possessed two beautiful, deep, brown eyes that revealed volumes of wonderful intellect and masterly will power. An abundance of beautiful black hair and the lingering blush of the rose on her cheeks gave to her that rare beauty we so seldom see in the gentler sex of the twentieth century.

"Edith, did you rest well last night?" inquired her mother, as she entered the breakfast room the next morning.

"Yes, mother, or at any rate I think I did; I was somewhat worn out when I retired as I had sat up a trifle late working on my lessons for today."

"Well, Edith, as this is your senior year in high school your father and I have been considering the matter of having you discontinue your vocal lessons for the remainder of the term; we feel they are too much for you, and that you are overtaxing yourself to a certain degree."

"You know we want you to keep up your grades, and as your work in school takes most of your time, we may see fit for you to drop your music for a while," added Mr. Melton.

To this Edith made no reply, for it certainly was a serious blow to her, as she took great delight in her vocal lessons and was especially fond of the way in which the instructor had encouraged the culture of such an unusual voice.

With a sad and heavy heart, but with the same sweet smiling face as of old, she kissed her mother good-bye, and she and Guy, seated in their Ford coupé, sped away toward Yorkville.

As Mrs. Melton busied herself with her morning's work, she could not keep from thinking of the expression that flitted across the face of her daughter when she had told her they might deem it best for her to drop her music for a while. "However, her father and I are in a better position to know

what is best for her; yet, at the same time I could see by that expression it would not meet with her approval, — but notwithstanding the fact there was the same sweet smile as of yore when she bade me good-bye and I love to think of her with that smile on her face, as it is balm for any mother's heart," mused the mother.

"Well! Hello Edith!" called Emily Carter when they met at the first intermission, "what in the world is the matter with you this morning? You do not seem like yourself; for you are always on hand, ready to give us a panacea for all our ills, and a smile for all our frowns."

"Well, I did not know that I was the Dr. Cure All, and a pleasant pellet ready to take at any time," replied Edith.

"Well, you are," retorted Emily.

"Say, Edith, that solo you sang at church Sunday evening must have been something beyond the ordinary, as I heard a party say he seldom found time for church going, but he felt well paid for his effort in the enjoyment of your exceptional voice. He furthermore said he did wish his daughter had a few of your charming accomplishments and he would be proud of her."

"Now Emily, please come and tell me who it was that made such a remark as that?"

"Well, if you must know, I'll tell you," retorted Emily, "it was my dad."

"Really?" said Edith, "then if he enjoyed my singing so much, perhaps it may be an inducement for him to come again, and by the way, Emily, why don't you folks ever come to church?"

"What do you do on Sunday, or where do you go?"

Emily's face reddened somewhat as she tried to answer her friend the best she could. "We are not in the habit of church going," she replied, which was a rather lame excuse and yet very fitting to those who are seldom seen inside a sanctuary. It is an evident fact that habit becomes a second nature to all of us, and Emily did not propose saying anything further about the church or anyone or anything connected with it, as the questions Edith had plied her with had caused her no little embarrassment.

It was with a sigh of relief that afternoon that Edith heard the dismissal bell, for she could not tell for the life of her how it was that she had managed to drag through her recitations of the day. The unexpected statement that had fallen from her mother's lips that morning was a somewhat serious blow to her, for, without a doubt she derived more pleasure from her music than she could ever hope to obtain from her high school work.

Her unhappy mood had been very noticeable to all her class members, and especially had one of them been deeply concerned as to the nature of her trouble. For some unknown reason she decided she would walk to the post office after school and inquire for the afternoon mail.

This one act afforded an opportunity that a certain Hugh Carter had long been waiting to seize, so needless to say he leisurely strolled down the street by Edith's side.

Having finished the evening chores, Mr. Melton found time to look over the daily paper before supper as the children had not arrived home from school.

Mrs. Melton busied herself with some fancy work she was trying to finish before Christmas.

Suddenly Mr. Melton peered over the rim of his glasses, dropped the paper from his hand, and asked if she did not think it was time for the children to be home. "Do you suppose something has happened to them?"

"Can it be six o'clock, David? I have been so intent on my work that I had not taken time to stop and consider what time it was getting to be: you know it is so unlike Edith not to phone me if she has been detained in any way."

This observation added fresh fuel to their already troubled anxiety for the safe arrival of the children.

"It may be, mother, that they were detained on account of the class play, and do you know, I see no material need for such things. They have a tendency to lessen their interest in school work," observed the worried father.

"Yes, David, and not only that, but it fills their minds with a lot of nonsense and fool love affairs that they can have ample time to learn about after school days are over," said Mrs. Melton.

"Speaking for myself," she continued, "I'd much rather Edith would not take part in the play; but what can we do? It seems as if it takes all these non-essentials to get a student through high school regardless of the worry on the part of the parents."

Just then, glancing through the dining-room window, Mr. Melton caught a glimpse of a light from a car and said he thought they were coming.

On hearing footsteps Mrs. Melton opened the door for Edith and Guy and inquired as to what had kept them so late as supper had been waiting some little time. Edith soon explained that they had been detained after school to make

further arrangements regarding their play, and as the days were so short it had made them quite late in coming home.

She did not tell her mother that Hugh Carter had walked as far as the post office with her, and not at a rapid gait; nor did Guy disclose this secret either, as most young brothers would have done, but he kept perfectly mute in this matter, as he had utmost confidence in Edith's capability of attending to her own affairs, and doing it in the right way.

Neither did he say that Hugh Carter had asked his sister to attend a movie with him on Sunday evening, and that she had given him a flat refusal. All these things were flitting through Guy's mind at a rapid rate as he prepared for the evening meal.

Not many miles distant, in a certain home, a certain young man was pondering in his mind how Edith Melton could have so flatly refused his company when all the girls in town were just waiting for a chance like the one she had turned down. He had always been quite popular with no few of the feminine sex, so really this was some setback for a young man of his caliber, thought he.

"I suppose she thinks she is better than the average young lady, but I will not be daunted by this first attempt, for the old saying is: 'If at first you don't succeed, try, try again,'" he meditated.

With these thoughts uppermost in his mind he hastily dressed himself, and was soon on his way to Miss Grace Moore's home where he found her waiting to attend the dance with him.

He could not tell why, but it seemed to him that the dance was not as gay and enticing as of old, and did not afford

as much pleasure and enjoyment to him as heretofore; but was it really the dance, or was it he himself?

Often while dancing with Grace Moore that evening, the thought would mount high in his mind, of how much more he could enjoy a dance with a certain little brown-eyed country girl, who at this time had long been in dreamland, for it was now getting along to the small hours of the morning.

Hugh Carter was now almost twenty years old, and would have been through high school long before this if he had only applied himself, for he was an apt scholar, and had a clear conception of things, but was too fond of a frivolous life, and spent too much of his time in fashionable society.

Mr. Carter had advised him of the fact just a few days previous, that if he did not graduate with his class this year, he would not get a chance to finish his high school work, and he would not send him to college to take up the study of law.

"Things are assuming a serious aspect," declared Hugh, as he bethought himself that the best thing he could do would be to settle down after the holidays, to real business and come out in the end with his class, with colors flying.

The very thought of not attending a law school almost took away his breath, for this would mean utter disaster to all his well-laid plans for his future career.

With all these thoughts weighing down upon him, and with an aching void in his heart, at last at a late hour he sought a few hours of repose.

Edith awoke early in the morning much refreshed by her night's rest, and as this was Friday, she always arose somewhat earlier that day in order to assist her mother in doing some of the week-end cleaning, before she went to school.

While she was sweeping and dusting, her voice could be heard singing some of her favorite songs, as she often remarked that "she could work better when she sang."

She was interrupted by her mother, calling to her to come to the phone.

It was Emily calling to tell her that they were to rehearse the play that evening and inviting Edith and Guy to remain in town after school and to take dinner with her.

Edith thanked her and told her that she would let her know when she came to school.

Hanging up the receiver, she entered the kitchen to talk the matter over with her mother, but not finding her there she called to her, and then descended the steps to the basement. "Mother, we are to rehearse the play this evening, and Emily has very cordially invited Guy and myself to remain in town and take dinner with her."

"What did you tell her?"

"I told her I would let her know when I came to school this morning."

"You know, Edith, your father and I have never encouraged Emily and you to become very intimate friends on account of her brother Hugh, who you know is of questionable character, and if you accept this invitation it will only encourage him to make himself more agreeable than he has heretofore, and such a thing could not be countenanced by your father and me," observed Mrs. Melton. "Simply decline the invitation this time, and tell her your services are needed at home after school."

Edith, like most young girls, was naturally disappointed, as she dreaded the thought of telling Emily she would have to decline her invitation. However, she knew what her mother

had said regarding the character of the young man in question was all true. Edith was a young woman who thought much and said little.

The two girls did not meet until the noon hour when Emily learned that Edith would not be her guest at dinner that evening.

"Emily, did you tell her that it was I who had told you to invite her?" asked Hugh.

"No, I should say not," emphatically replied his sister.

Mrs. Melton was one mother who always tried to make her word good with her children, so when Edith came home from school she found plenty of work waiting for her willing hands to do.

Although Edith was gifted with a rare voice her mother was teaching her to do all sorts of housework, which might in after years be of great benefit to her.

Mother and daughter did many little odds and ends and by so doing lightened the Saturday's work to a great extent.

"What time do you go in to rehearsal tonight?" asked Mrs. Melton.

"We are supposed to be there at seven-thirty," said Edith. "Is there anything more you wish me to do, mother?"

"No — only we will sit here and rest a few minutes — or rather, I will, while you sing for me my favorite song, 'The Old Rugged Cross.' "

Edith immediately complied with her mother's request as she, too, was very fond of this dear old hymn.

As she arose from the piano her mother said, "I feel quite rested now, as music always soothes my tired feelings."

"Now, mother, with your permission I will run to the barn and have Guy throw the saddle on Black Beauty and I will take a little ride before supper."

"All right, dear, but don't go far, as it is almost dark."

Edith's father had given her this beautiful animal on her sixteenth birthday and she had enjoyed many rides perched on the back of her noble horse.

Black Beauty had been taught by her young mistress, to perform many cunning little tricks.

It was nothing unusual to see her riding into Yorkville most any time, as she was considered a most graceful rider and had won several blue ribbons at the fair in the ladies' riding contest.

In compliance with her mother's wish she did not ride far, but on her return found the family waiting supper for her. She declared she could always boast of a better appetite after a ride with Black Beauty.

Guy informed her he got all the exercise needed to create an appetite by helping his father do the evening chores.

"We will have to hurry, Guy," said she, "or we will be late for the rehearsal, but by a little fast driving we can get there on time."

It was a wonderful December evening: the heavens were filled with myriads of stars and the cold frosty air was very invigorating as it helped to add a little more elasticity to the steps of those who were late in reaching home.

This evening might have been partly responsible for the way in which each one acted his part in the play, but at any rate this proved to be one of the best rehearsals they had ever had.

It was on the way home, that Guy informed Edith that he thought Hugh Carter did remarkably well with his part, for, said he, "it seems to appeal to his general make up."

"How did I act my part?" asked Edith.

"Just splendidly, only I don't like to see you with Hugh Carter as he is such a bad fellow."

"Yes, I think about that too, but I can't say anything as we are both members of the class and you know our parts were assigned to us, not selected by any one in the play."

It took her a long time to prepare to retire that night, and every time she closed her eyes to sleep, that play kept running through her mind like a moving picture show. Then, too, the words her mother had uttered were incessantly ringing in her ears, and she took it for granted that no matter how good Hugh's conduct in the future might be, it would be of no material good for her to intercede for him and thereby some day claim him as her first love. Little did she dream of the heated controversy that took place in her home that evening after she and Guy had taken their departure.

Neither did she know what a hard struggle it had been for her parents to permit her to continue her part in the play, all because she had to be thrown in such close contact with Hugh Carter, whom no one thought her equal in any respect.

It matters not how dissipated a young man may be, or how questionable his associates, be invariably tries to win the esteem and friendship of the purest and best of the feminine sex, especially when he falls head over heels in love.

It was hard for Edith to find sleep, so lifting the curtains to one side in order to see the starry firmament she then

began counting the stars, as she had heard her father say: "If you try to count the stars you will soon fall asleep."

She never could recall the last one she counted as it was not long until her eyes closed in sleep.

CHAPTER II

The Senior Class Play

THE NEXT morning the frost in the air of that early winter day, made the heat of the radiator feel more comfortable to Mr. Carter than it had heretofore, as he entered the dining-room and stood warming his hands waiting for his wife to announce breakfast. His deep gray eyes were fixed on the window, gazing into space, all unconscious of the fact that his wife had already announced breakfast was waiting.

"Joe, this is the second time I have told you breakfast was ready," said Mrs. Carter.

"Oh! I beg your pardon, I didn't hear you," and turning instantly he seated himself at the table, while a heavy scowl on his countenance portrayed a great degree of displeasure. Glancing in the direction where Emily was seated and with a sort of sarcasm in his voice he said: "Guess you'll not invite Miss Melton to your home again soon, as she so flatly refused your invitation last evening?

"It is only that she possesses such a rare voice and that the future has in store for her a wonderful career if her parents see fit to have her voice fully developed, that I sanction your intimate friendship with her."

Riveting his eyes on Hugh with an expression that indicated trouble, he continued: "I understand you and Miss Melton have been assigned the leading role in the play; if so, be very careful, that it doesn't end in some fool love affair,

for I am quite sure neither her parents nor yours would sanction anything of the sort.

"I hear much concerning her sweet unassuming disposition and her unconscious influence which no doubt will win for her many admiring friends, although she lacks one vital element for her future success which I consider the most essential — financial means."

Pushing his chair back from the table as he arose he said: "I imagine Miss Melton herself is not to blame. If she had taken a stand, said she would come, like you youngsters do when we advise otherwise, we wouldn't have been disappointed in our dinner guest."

Mrs. Carter felt a twinge of unpleasantness at her husband's remarks, but knew what he had stated was true, especially was this true of Hugh over whom they had very little jurisdiction.

Hugh kept perfectly silent in regard to the disappointment, but nevertheless he was harboring many unpleasant feelings for without a doubt her parents were responsible for it all. However he had fully decided he had ample time during the rehearsals to hold an audience with her, and to this aim he lent all his energies regardless of the statement that had just fallen from his father's lips.

Mr. Carter conducted a large department store, and his name in connection with the article of purchase was a guaranty of good quality, as he could boast of an up-to-date establishment and was recognized as the wealthiest resident of Yorkville.

He spent his entire time in his business interests, put his whole heart into his work, took pride in doing it well, and

enjoyed the routine of a busy day at the store as well as most men do.

The fact he had been successful in his business pursuits would lead us to this conclusion, for it was business, first, last, and always with him.

Since he had heard Edith sing there were times he grew weary and shrank for a moment from the daily monotonous repetition of details, and looked forward to a quiet hour at home with his family, "Much as a desert traveler views from a distance the tall palm trees of an oasis under whose shade he hopes soon to sit and quench his thirst at the crystal spring."

"These are mere daydreams," he would muse as he tried hard to banish them from his mind; but somehow that sweet voice he had heard sing had left a lasting impression upon him, and, try as he might, he couldn't forget it.

True it was that Edith and Emily were both members of the Senior Class and their acquaintance was ripening into a deep warm friendship although wholly unlike were their home environments, and for this reason, the Meltons wished for some break between the friends to widen with the passing of the days. These were the early days of December and the Senior Class play was to be staged just a short time before the holidays: all were busy studying their parts, as it promised to be the best of its kind the Senior Class had staged in many years.

Just why Hugh Carter and Edith Melton had been selected to play the leading roles in the play, was a mystery her parents could never solve — but, nevertheless, it happened thus — and to Hugh it strengthened hope, invigorated spirit, and helped develop a hidden character.

Hugh Carter was a young man of fine intellectual qualities, and possessed enough pep and push to make of himself

something of the lasting quality if he would only apply himself. Nevertheless he was not prone to wander in places where were to be found characters of estimable quality, and had you been influenced by him, you would have found yourself in questionable company and places.

The Meltons were aware of the character of young Carter and were not agreeably pleased that Edith had to be thrown in constant contact with him during these rehearsals.

It was unfortunate for the parents that Hugh had heard of their displeasure, as it only made matters worse for he redoubled all his efforts in order to accomplish his aim. Many sweet tender memories are clustered round these class plays, and in after years when we recall them they impart a sort of balm and quiet restful feeling that soothes like a sweet lullaby borne on the breezes as evening draws near and all is rest.

Especially is this true, when we recall some romance that had its beginning here. Heretofore Hugh had been a frequent caller at the Moore home, but now Grace was looking upon his actions of late with scorn and displeasure for fear all her pretty wiles and cunning devices she had used in spinning her web, hoping to entrap him as her victim, might end in utter failure.

Grace's father was a gambler and her family in general possessed no stability of character and she was of that gauzy, butterfly nature whose sole aim was to vamp Hugh Carter, edge her way into the Carter family and thereby establish herself in the aristocratic society of Yorkville.

Mr. Carter had been very much vexed with his son's actions during the past few months and on this particular evening advised him of the fact; if he didn't take into consideration the thought of remaining at home part of his even-

ings, he saw no further need of his trying to get through school this year.

"Oh, Dad!" exclaimed Hugh; "don't you know we are going to give our class play and that will take much of our time till the holidays; beside I forgot to make mention of the fact that after that time I have decided to apply myself and finish my high school education this year.

"Now, Mr. Carter, with your permission I will accompany your daughter to the rehearsal this evening."

A smile of approval flitted across the father's face as he nodded his consent and the program was carried out to the letter. After the children had taken their departure he spent a short time with his wife and the two younger children, J. Edgar and Mary Elizabeth, before returning to the store to look over some mail matter that had just come in. As his wife entered the room where he had been seated he said: "Who were you talking to over the phone?"

She answered: "Grace Moore."

"I suppose she wanted to talk with Hugh?"

"Yes, and I am really glad he was away."

"Well," said Mr. Carter, "I do wish something would turn up that would put a stop to this fool boy of ours giving so much of his time to the frivolous and inconsistent Miss Moore and so little to actual business propositions. I tell you, wife, my patience is just about worn threadbare with him and I for one am ready to let him get out and hustle for himself, for it requires no small amount to supply his many demands."

He arose abruptly, strode toward the hall, picked up his hat and was gone before his wife had time to say anything.

Shortly after he made his exit she ascended the stairs, and after the children had been snugly tucked in bed to dream of

Santa Claus, she seated herself to read as she had become quite interested in one of the late novels and by a new author, and was anxious to learn how it would end. She couldn't tell why, but for the life of her she could not plunge into the depths of that book as she had done heretofore, for somehow that conversation between father and son kept crowding into her mind, and it seemed more or less to have a certain bearing on her, and try as she might, she couldn't keep her mind on her book.

Gradually the mistakes she and her husband had made in regard to the rearing of their children surged through her mind till finally the book fell from her hand and she was lost in deep convicting thoughts.

Footsteps aroused her and looking up she saw her husband standing in the doorway.

"Well! wife, aren't you sitting up a little late? I thought I would find you fast asleep, but here you are reading a novel as usual — and I see by your book mark you have finished it, and did it end the way you wanted it to? Did they marry, or someone die as they usually do?"

"Oh! I don't know, I somehow lost interest in it tonight, as I had Hugh on my mind, for you remember what he said to you tonight, and I do hope he will try to make good. He has been so reckless of late, I have been reading more than usual in order to drown my troubles concerning him."

"Well! I will inform you I am in no mood to discuss Hugh tonight as I am all out of sorts about a bill of goods I was expecting for Christmas and it hasn't come," with which remark he prepared to retire.

Ere long the mother heard the chatter of happy voices in the dining-room that announced the children's return, and it

was while they were doing ample justice to some delicious fruit that Hugh seized the opportunity to impart a fraction of his thoughts concerning Edith.

At length he said: "Sis, how do you think Edith Melton acts her part?"

"Oh! my! Is it possible you are so stupid, can't you see she is outdoing all the rest of us?

"I overheard a conversation yesterday between the professor and one of the faculty and they said: 'she would without a doubt some day become famous.' "

"Well, you know she is a star no matter where you place her and would you think I was losing my head if I were to tell you I think she is a jewel?"

"Much good, my big brother, it will do you, no matter what your thoughts may be concerning her — besides there is Grace, who is perfectly foolish about you and"—

"Stop, don't utter another word," said Hugh, "and don't read any more palms tonight or you may have the nightmare or something equally as bad; besides, Grace has only taken it for granted that she has spun her web to catch me, but time will tell," he said, as he passed out of the room.

As he was preparing to retire he was living over again the act in the play, where he takes Edith by the hand and tells her he loves her and while he was pouring out his deep affection to her tonight on the altar of love he held her hand a trifle tighter than necessary, which act afforded him no small amount of solace.

"This part affords me much pleasure," he soliloquized, "and before these rehearsals are over I hope to prove to Miss Emily she isn't as wise an old palmist as she thinks she is."

Hugging these precious thoughts close to his heart his deep blue eyes soon closed in sleep.

One evening, just a short time before the class play, when he returned home from school he was met by Emily who informed him that Mr. Page and daughter Margaret of Cleveland, Ohio, had arrived that afternoon and would remain with the former's mother until after Christmas.

"Well, by Jove! how does this happen?" exclaimed Hugh, "for I received a letter from Robert only yesterday, and he never mentioned one word about his father and Margaret coming to Yorkville."

Mr. Page was a wealthy hardware dealer of Cleveland and having been reared at Yorkville he and Mr. Carter had grown from boyhood friends to years of ripening age, yet maintained the self-same friendship of earlier days. This lasting friendship existing between the two gentlemen was recognized by their families and more especially by Hugh and Robert who had cultivated a great fondness for each other.

Robert was a trifle Hugh's senior, yet his sterling habits and business qualities would naturally leave the impression that he was the latter's senior by several years.

"Folks who come to Yorkville to spend the holidays must expect to attend our class play," said Hugh, after he had listened to all Emily had to say concerning the arrival of their old friends.

A few evenings following, dusk was descending and the air crisp and cold with a light snow on the ground that had fallen the day before made December the twenty-second, the evening of the class play, seem more like winter than any one heretofore. All were eagerness and expectation in this town

of Yorkville waiting to see this wonderful play they had heard so much about, "All On Account of Polly."

The Class had secured the Riggs Opera house for the play and had sold all the seat tickets, "so there was nothing else left for them to do, but to sell standing room," declared one member of the class.

The play consisted of three acts, the scene showing the living-room of Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Beverly, society people who are trying to keep up an appearance and at the same time ward off a financial crash.

Hugh Carter as "Baldwin Beverly," their care-free son, was the life of the party. He flirted throughout the acts and finally fell in love with his father's ward, "Miss Polly Perkins," whose money retrieves the Beverly fortune and whose sweetness of character wins young and old in the play and in the audience as well.

The character of "Polly Perkins" was portrayed by Edith Melton.

Emily Carter and Ray Allen, Rev. Allen's son, made a striking success of their parts as Mr. and Mrs. Ralph Beverly. A number of specialties were put on between acts and one of the numbers included a vocal selection rendered by Edith Melton.

She found it necessary to respond to an encore, the piano accompaniment being played by Emily Carter.

Her voice was clear and sweet and the general verdict was that with a little hard work and study she might hope to reach a coveted height on the ladder of fame.

The play was a great success throughout the whole performance and much credit was due the various characters in the commendable way they acted their parts.

In speaking of the play the next morning at breakfast, Mr. Melton said: "I don't know when I have laughed so much, as Hugh was a whole circus in my estimation."

To this remark Edith made no reply, but after breakfast she leisurely sauntered into the living-room, seated herself at the piano, played and sang snatches of some of her favorite songs that were surging through her mind together with the contents of a note that lay on her desk upstairs and that must be answered immediately.

"Honestly, I can't think of a single thing I have done to encourage his attitude toward me," she soliloquized, as the contents of the note passed rapidly through her mind. "All I hope is, that after he understands the situation he will forever quit thrusting his presence upon me. No use to wait any longer, for the quicker it is over with the better I will feel, yet I do hope we may at least remain friends."

So saying she quickly arose, went to her room, read the note again, then said, half audibly: 'It is impossible to grant the request. 'The third time is the charm,' " she mechanically mused, as she gave the envelope an extra pressure on the seal, slipped it into her pocket, and started to the mail box.

Guy had been watching her from the barn, and in a short time found some excuse to wander in the direction of the front gate and in passing the mail box he pushed the top back sufficiently to see the letter, and with a loud chuckle he said: "I thought I was right about it."

"Guy Melton! what are you doing?" called a voice from Edith's window as he started back to the barn. There was no response, except a broad grin on his face and a toss of his cap high up in the air, as he hurriedly retraced his steps in the direction of the barn.

CHAPTER III

The Skating Party

HAVING little dreamed, much less thought about going with his father on one of his business trips to the city, Hugh was all excitement Thursday morning when he left the store after his father said: "This is all the business I have to transact with you this morning as I am very busy and too, it is time for you to go to school."

Mr. Carter's actions had both astonished and delighted his son, for it was so wholly unlike anything he had ever done before, that Hugh almost fell off the chair, when the statement fell from his father's lips; but, nevertheless, he meant to make good use of every minute of his time and the trip would afford him untold pleasure.

The most puzzling feature of the whole affair to the son was the expense tied up with such a trip although, thought Hugh, as he rapidly strode on toward the Township High School: "I'll wager he has the time and expenses figured to the last penny."

As he neared the building he gave a shrill whistle which occasioned Ray Allen to look back, and in a few minutes the two boys were entering together.

Hugh took time to impart the intelligence of his trip to the city to Ray who felt very envious, but at the same time was truly thankful Hugh would be out of town for a while.

It was with a great degree of pleasure that Hugh seized the first opportunity to tell Emily, who afterwards informed

him she knew all about it and that her mother had been persuading her father for the past week to grant this request, but only that morning had said: "I have given up all hopes of your father taking Hugh with him on this trip."

"So it is mother who is responsible for my pleasure," said Hugh, "and it is all so unexpected too that it is almost unbelievable."

The following evening found father and son at the railroad station ready to step aboard the eight-thirty P. M. train.

The next morning after Mrs. Allen had listened very attentively to all her son had stated, she said: "Excellent work, my boy, you're getting down to business with a rush now," after she had learned all the particulars concerning the skating party to be held out at Deacon Jones' pond that evening.

Stepping over to where her son was seated and laying her hand on his shoulder she said: "It is too bad you couldn't have been assigned the leading role in the play, for there is no doubt in my mind but what that class play is responsible for Grace Moore's broken heart and Hugh Carter's profound friendship for Edith Melton."

"He will be both mad and disappointed when he learns about the skating party," said Ray.

Ray spent a very busy day, and not until he had seen Mr. Melton's Hudson car parked near the department store in the early part of the afternoon, did he succeed in being assured that Edith and Guy would attend the party.

Mrs. Melton had just left the car when he stopped her to deliver the invitation saying: "Your phone is out of order, for I have tried repeatedly all morning to call Edith."

"Yes," was the reply, "but I will deliver your message."

The afternoon shopping had been completed, the list of articles carefully one by one gone over to make sure nothing had been omitted as Mrs. Melton sat at the counter in the department store waiting for Guy.

The afternoon was far-spent before he made his appearance as he had been enjoying a good skate with some boys at the creek bridge at the outer edge of town.

After learning of the party to be held that evening and that he and Edith were to dine with Emily he fairly made the Hudson hum, for Deacon Jones' pond of glittering ice loomed up before his eyes every jump of the way home.

On reaching home, in his eagerness to impart the news of the party and that they were to take dinner with Emily he almost forgot to assist his mother with her packages.

Calling to him to assist her with her bundles Mrs. Melton hurried on to the house, but Guy in his haste overtook and passed her on the walk and before he got to the door began to call to Edith with every breath.

"Well, Guy, what in the name of common sense is the matter with you?" asked Edith.

With cap and gloves in one hand, cheeks red and rosy from the cold biting air he hastily unbuttoned his mackinaw, threw it wide open seemingly to afford him more volume of speech and then plunged into the full details concerning their engagement for the evening and finished by saying, "Now do hurry, Edith, or we will be late for dinner."

Standing with her arms folded and forcing back a determined smile at the picture Guy had presented in delivering his speech, after he had finished, she said: "This is very unexpected but nevertheless I won't disappoint Emily this time."

The first visit to the Carter home was one to be long remembered, for its spacious rooms, elegant furnishings, artistic paintings together with rich tapestry draperies gave the impression of wealth and luxury.

The dinner hour proved to be a most enjoyable occasion after which everything was hurry and bustle, getting skates adjusted and making ready to start to the pond.

Mrs. Carter, like all natural mothers, admonished the children to be very careful as the pond would afford an ideal place for someone to get a broken limb or head.

Wonderful night! It was one of those nights when the moon is at its best, and adds its part to the gaiety of the occasion, by shedding an abundance of radiant light on the scene.

"Just an ideal evening for this party," declared Ray Allen as he was fastening Edith's skates on for her. When she was free she turned to him and said: "How did it happen that the party was given tonight and who was it that first proposed it?"

Continuing she said: "It is too bad that all the class members couldn't be present."

He waited a few moments, then said: "The ice is in perfect condition and too the moon affords so much light we thought it an ideal evening for the occasion."

It must have been something near ten o'clock when Mrs. Carter heard someone open the front door and on going to the head of the stairs she discovered Hugh standing in the hall below.

"Son, how does this come? I thought you weren't to return until tomorrow evening?"

"Oh, well! you know Dad, so after he had finished his buying, he became restless and said he thought we ought to come home as he could save quite a little hotel bill.

"Mother, tell Emily to come down, I have something for her."

"Oh you know your class has a skating party tonight at Deacon Jones' pond, just north of town, and she and Edith and Guy have gone."

"Edith and Guy? How did she come to go with them?"

"They were here for dinner this evening and then all went together."

"Well, mother, what else has happened since I left home?" Without waiting for an answer he passed her in the hall, ran to the attic to get his skates and was soon out of hearing.

He ran the car out, jumped in and headed it toward the pond and was soon on the scene of action. He thought he had never heard a bunch of young people make so much noise in all his life, and judging from the amount of laughter and noise they were surely having a fine time.

His first thoughts were of Edith and to enjoy a good skate with her, but on nearing the pond he saw her at the farther end skating with Ray Allen. This made him perfectly furious and his first impulse was to walk straight up to them and ask her to skate with him.

After re-consideration he thought that would never do, for it would make her think no more of him and perhaps a great deal less, for no gentleman could afford to do an act like this and he must prove himself to be a gentleman at all hazards.

Having driven up almost unobserved by the skaters (except Ray Allen who thought he knew the old familiar hum of

the motor but who said nothing), he stole softly away and turned his car toward town. He drove around for some little time trying to cool his aching brain, for it surely cut him deeply to see someone else occupying that coveted place by her side.

Finally, he bethought himself to do a little detective work so driving back in the direction of said pond, and stopping at some remote distance in a secluded spot he waited for the party to break up to see if the Parson's son would take Edith home.

He didn't have to wait long to gain the bit of information he was seeking, for it was not long until the party broke up and all started for home.

He could see plainly from the lonely shaded spot Emily enter the coupé with Guy, and Edith in company with Ray enter Rev. Allen's Ford touring car. "This is enough to make a fellow desperate and commit some irrational deed, but I've always heard: 'When the cat is away the mice will play.' So she thinks I will never know about this, and, too, I rather guess Meltons would be in favor of young Allen as he is the preacher's son and a goody, goody Sunday-school boy." With all this passing through his mind he cut across an alley, got home ahead of Emily and hurried up to his room.

It was a very cold night and his hands were numb, yet not heeding his discomfort and without removing his overcoat he knelt by his window, which had been raised a trifle, in order to hear what might be said, and waited for the skaters to return.

Guy and Emily arrived first, then in a short time Ray Allen parked his car alongside of the Melton coupé.

By this time Hugh's heart was beating so loudly, caused by the excitement of the occasion, that he did wonder if he could stand to witness the scene if Edith should drive away with young Allen. Presently he leaned calmly back against a chair, drew a long profound sigh and felt a hundred per cent better after he heard Edith say "I'm going back with Guy."

These were the last words he heard uttered and in a moment she had entered the coupé, the door swung to and it sped away.

All nightmares have an end, so this one came to an end with the announcement of Emily's footsteps on the stairs.

Hugh noiselessly drew himself up after he heard Emily close her door, removed his overcoat, drew his chair over to the radiator, lighted a cigar and smoked with as much ease and comfort as the Indian smoked his pipe of peace.

"Her heart shows her choice," he soliloquized, as he sat thinking over the little moonlight movie that he had just witnessed outside his window and the beautiful girlish figure that had acted so quickly in compliance with the emphatic statement that had fallen from her lips.

To Edith this evening had been anything but a pleasure, as she vividly recalled the angered expression on Ray's face when he said: "You have been influenced by Hugh Carter, but you will live to see the day when you will have cause to regret your attitude toward me. I imagine he dictated the contents of the note I received from you. If so, I will see that he will be rewarded for his ingenious wit."

The meaning of his words together with the angered expression all wearied her, and she remained so silent that at length Guy said: "You don't act as if you had gone skating,"

and before Edith had time to answer he said: "Did you see a car drive up to the pond and in a few minutes drive away?"

"No, who was it, Guy?"

"I don't know but I heard someone say they thought it was Hugh Carter."

"Nonsense, Guy, it couldn't have been him for they aren't expected home until tomorrow evening."

The mysterious car and its occupant at the pond would remain a mystery to the merry skaters, although Ray Allen seemed very much pleased that the driver decided not to park his car and form one of the company.

CHAPTER IV

The Sale

AFTER the discouraging experience of the previous night, but after all ended in a very commendable manner, a sound of steps in the hall after the quick opening and closing of a door, together with the low humming of an old familiar Scotch ballad, announced to Emily, the following morning her brother's return.

When he entered the breakfast room where the family had assembled, she said: "Well! what are you doing here?"

He shrugged his shoulders, stepped to her side and replied by saying: "Who has a better right to occupy this place?" then instantly seated himself at the table.

"You should have been here for the party last night," said Emily, as she so willingly plunged into the details and vividly described all the gaiety connected with it until Hugh interrupted by saying: "Oh! you make me feel like a pugilist."

"Why so?" asked his sister.

"Because I feel like the fighter who has received the knockout, been picked up and helped totter to the corner of safety after the time-keeper has counted the first ten digits over his avoirdupois. The party is over," he slowly mused.

It never occurred to her to inquire, as to the time her brother returned, and lucky it was for all concerned, as no member of the family had any intention of divulging the

secret and to this day, she doesn't know her brother was a spectator at the pond.

It wasn't from her own inclination, or a mere sense of duty, that Emily hurriedly dressed herself and soon appeared in the hall below, waiting for the two younger children, but only that she had made a promise and she meant to keep it, while she listened to the church bells, which could be heard so distinctly, calling the people to the house of worship.

"Well! hello Sis, who are you waiting for, and where are you going?" said Hugh.

"I am waiting for the children as we are going to Sunday school this morning, for I promised Edith I would come today."

"I might have gone too, had I been invited," remarked Hugh.

"Oh do come, please do," pleaded Emily.

"No, not today, but I expect to start real soon," was the answer in tones that showed a vague tendency to yield, with a little more persuasion on the part of Emily.

Once again in his room, he lived over again the picture of the night before. He wondered what Edith would say if he told her. But he had no intention of telling her.

The sight of his dresser, filled up with the contents of his traveling bag, presented an untidy appearance as he knotted his tie, and a few moments later, went down the walk toward town.

He had a feeling his walk was for some purpose, toward some objective, which he looked forward to with a certain excitement. But what that objective was he didn't know, for his walk ended before it materialized.

He strolled around the square, noticed particularly the show window of his father's store, which displayed a beautiful painting, done in rich blue-green, and heavy violet-lavender shadows. "I mean to have it," he uttered as he turned away, looked at his watch, then started in the direction of the church around the corner, just in time to meet Emily and the children about a block away.

The congregation had dispersed, the cars were hurrying here and there, as he realized with a sense of regret how quickly the time had flown, and mused: "You're too slow," then reluctantly retraced his steps.

The main conversationalist during the dinner hour, was Emily, who chatted away, describing all the pretty gowns she had seen at church, then dwelt on the rendition of Edith's selection and wound up by saying: "I was surprised to see so many at church, the majority I imagine was attracted by a desire to hear Edith sing."

To what extent might the unconscious influence of Edith Melton contain a prediction of the future, was unanswerable at this time; however, certain members of the family were contemplating the thought of being attracted in the new channel that Emily had just chosen.

"I was thinking about this sale the other day," observed Mr. Carter a few evenings later, after he had read in the *Yorkville Citizen* the announcement of Mr. Melton's semi-annual thoroughbred hog sale, of February seventh.

"I have never attended one of these sales, so if the weather permits and business isn't too rushing at the store I think I will drive out for awhile."

He continued by saying: "I have heard someone say, this is to be the largest one he has ever held and he is offering at this time some exceptionally fine hogs."

He then laid his paper on the table, entered into further conversation regarding the sale at which time he learned Mr. Melton was expecting buyers from many distant points and among them would be Mr. Walker of Illinois who had been a splendid buyer at the sales for several years.

"Oh! yes," interrupted Emily, "and Mrs. Walker is coming too; Edith told me the other day they had received a message to this effect sometime ago."

After a day filled with long hours of hard work had come to an end a few evenings after this, Mr. Melton remarked: "I am afraid I'm going to be disappointed after the sale."

"Why David, why do you talk this way?" asked his wife.

"Just because money is scarce; so looking at it from a reasonable standpoint, I know they won't bring as much as they have at previous sales. I have been figuring on this one for some time, have worn the point off my pencil no few times, but I see it doesn't either increase or diminish its receipts one penny, so I have decided to wait and learn what the results will be."

"David, that sounds like a more sensible man; besides I think it high time for you to stop and count your blessings."

"Oh! yes I know all this is true, and I give it due consideration, yet at the same time I am thinking of Edith and what it means in a financial way, when she goes to Chicago."

"Oh! David, wait just a moment, I want to tell you what Edith's old professor said to me the other day. He said he had written that French instructor in Chicago and was expecting an answer immediately. He still maintains we could do no better than have her finish under his supervision."

"Well, mother, I am tired and am going to retire, as my old bones fairly ache. I think every time I hold one of these sales it will be the last, for there is so much hard work connected with them, but somehow I dread the thought of parting with my hogs, as I have been in the business so long, it has become a second nature to me. You must come out to the pens tomorrow to see them, as they are as fine a bunch, if not finer, than any I have ever owned."

Without further remarks he slowly ascended the stairs to his room.

It was only the next afternoon that Hugh seized an opportunity to hold an audience with Edith, when she and Emily started down the walk after school, as she motioned for Guy to drive on.

It may be easily assumed that Hugh Carter understood himself better than most young men do, nevertheless he knew exactly what he wanted to do and did it. He hurriedly approached the young ladies, while he experienced pleasant and congenial feelings.

"Why didn't you wait for me?" called Janet Wilson, as she ran up all out of breath, gave Emily a jerk on the coat sleeve that occasioned her to step back, at which anything but an unpleasant sanction crept over Hugh, and a few moments later said: "Edith, did you enjoy the skating party?"

"Oh! yes, I suppose I did. It was too bad you were out of town, for Emily said you would be disappointed when you learned about it."

"Now, Edith, if I ask you a question will you answer me truthfully?"

"I will if I can."

"Well! tell me if young Allen took you home that evening."

"No, he wanted to, but I told him: 'I am going back with Guy.'"

"I have a terrible suspicion that the party was given on this particular evening, wholly on account of my absence from home," said Hugh very pointedly.

With searching eyes that expressed a strong determination she turned to him and said: "Had I known his deep incentive, I should have remained at home."

When they reached the post office they were met face to face by Hugh's father, who recognized their presence with a bow, slightly raised his hat and passed on.

The following Sunday morning, the sun shone out through air filled with cold biting frost that gave to one and all an invigorating spirit of which we are so susceptible, on a clear, cold winter day.

"Did he really mean he would come? There was a tint of coloring to his remarks when he said: 'I will freely grant anything you desire.'" Thus were Edith's thoughts as she hurriedly entered the church and took her accustomed place in the choir.

Once or twice she glanced over the audience, and every time she did her eyes met the expression of two handsome

deep blue eyes, by the right of possession belonging to Hugh Carter.

She couldn't tell why, but her voice floated over the auditorium with much more power of volume than ever before, and too, the sermon was in keeping with the beauty of the day, or was it because she felt a deeper, keener interest in the sermon today? This she couldn't determine.

"This is the finest letter I have ever received from Robert and I mean to follow his advice, for by so doing I know I will meet with nothing but success in the end. Especially, do I like to linger on the lines where he tells me: 'The prize is worthy of the trial.' Am indeed sorry to learn his lady friend is critically ill, but do hope she will recover." These were the thoughts that had preoccupied Hugh's mind for some little time in the afternoon as he sat in his room, holding Robert's letter in his hand after reading it,—then consoled himself by devoting the remainder of the afternoon in letter writing.

"It's all due to that little girl I heard sing this morning. Don't know how he will feel about it. Little I dreamed that a girl could turn my head so completely. But of course you never can tell what a girl can do," he soliloquized as he stood with his hands thrust deep into his pockets, after the letter had been finished and sealed, ready to start on its journey. He then went over to his table, picked up one of the sale bills, read it and said: "More than once I wished I could attend it, but if I can't,—I can't, that's all." He went directly to the living room, where he found Emily snugly wrapped in a beautiful lounging robe, fast asleep.

"Why don't you wake up? Where are all the rest of the family?" said Hugh, as he gave her a second little shake before she made any attempt to answer him.

Straightening herself up and rubbing her eyes in a half dazed manner, she said: "Oh! I don't know where they are, unless they have driven out to Mr. Melton's, for the last thing I heard Dad say to mother was: 'Do you want to drive out to see the hogs this afternoon?' "

Going over to the window, and lifting the curtain to one side, Hugh said: "Well! they've gone. The garage door is open and the car is gone."

"In just about twenty-four hours, the sale will be under good headway," said Mr. Melton Monday, after he had examined the morning mail, that contained many letters and cards. Among them, was a card from the Walkers, saying, they would arrive at eight forty-five o'clock that evening.

The tedium of a long day filled with hours of hard work came to an end, when a glorious full moon broke through a rift in the clouds, looked down upon "Quiet Dale Farm," that stood in the shadow of tall locust trees, where bright light from the windows showed that it was the pleasant abode of peace and comfort.

"The swift flying clouds are a good indication of a storm or change in the weather," remarked Mr. Melton as he arose from the couch, where he had enjoyed a short period of rest.

After consulting the timepiece that had performed faithful service for many, many years, he said: "My nerves seem more steady after this rest so I think I can insure you safety in driving the car to meet the Walkers. Mother, you must

hurry as it is almost time for the train,'' he added, as he went to the garage.

Contrary to Mr. Melton's prediction of the previous evening, the following morning was an ideal day for the sale, and the immense crowd that thronged the big sale barn, spoke only too well of the quality and type of the hogs to be offered at this time.

Much spirited bidding was manifested when the hogs were driven into the sale ring, as the buyers were eager to purchase some of Mr. Melton's fancy type.

Mr. Walker succeeded in securing several of the best that were offered at a fabulous price, which aroused the curiosity of no few local residents, among them being Mr. Carter, eager to learn who he was and where he was from.

After the sale and in discussing its success Mr. Melton said: ''I believe everybody was hog-hungry for they sold far beyond my greatest expectations.''

''Well, Mr. Melton, that isn't a bad feature of the sale, is it?'' asked Mr. Walker.

His face displaying a serene smile, Mr. Melton continued his remarks and said: ''What a load has been lifted from my shoulders today! Tonight I can lie down and enjoy a much better sleep than I have had for some time.''

Mr. Carter who had been standing within reasonable distance and had heard the foregoing remarks, seemed deeply interested, with a strong desire to obtain the total receipts of the sale.

''I do wish you could have heard Edith and Mrs. Walker sing, as she too is a talented lady, and possesses one of those deep contralto voices, so you may readily imagine with what harmony the two voices blended,'' said Mrs. Carter when

she returned home, where she was met by Emily who asked numberless questions concerning the sale, and especially was she curious about the cultured little lady from Illinois.

After listening very attentively while his father related some of the incidents connected with the exciting buyers, Hugh said: I wouldn't mind to be in the hog business myself: just see how much money you can make, in such a short time."

"Yes, but my son, do you stop to consider how much time and labor it has required to obtain these satisfactory results? These things require a great amount of hard work and time. They aren't like a mushroom, come to us in one night."

Continuing, the father said: "I understand they are going to send Edith to Chicago this fall to finish her music; if so, that will demand no small amount of money."

Turning instantly, and riveting his eyes on Emily, Hugh said: "Did you know she was going?"

"Yes, they have friends in Chicago she is going to stay with, and I believe the name is Jackson."

"Oh! I know who they are," interrupted Mrs. Carter. "Mrs. Jackson and Edith's mother were schoolmates and very dear friends, and I think Mr. Jackson is a noted lawyer. Am I right about it, Joe?"

"Yes, you are quite right."

"We have spent a most enjoyable day; am indeed glad the Lord has so abundantly prospered you," said Rev. Allen to Mr. Melton the latter part of the week, preparatory to the departure after he and his wife had spent the day at "Quiet Dale Farm." No few times during the day had Mrs. Allen tried to force a conversation with her hostess that would em-

brace a subject pertaining to her son and his profound admiration for Edith, but each and every time she had met with a rebuttal.

With a twinge of bitter hatred burning in her heart, needless to say, she had to return home with no favorable message to console Ray's revengeful heart.

CHAPTER V

An Enemy's Plot

THE RESULTS were Ray had stored away in his mind not only a few but many, desultory thoughts, but the one most predominating and lingering was, that when the opportunity presented itself, he was thoroughly convinced he would be ready for quick action.

Unlike most ministers' sons he was almost void of honor in his own town, his classmates were not favorably impressed with his continuous ungentlemanly behavior and unscrupulous principles. Listening attentively to the dictates of a conscience that was ready at any instant to yield in defiance of the law, he had fully decided a very fitting conjuncture had arrived for him to put into operation his formulated plans, the morning following his parents' visit with the Meltons.

"Now, if Grace will keep her promise, as she has promised she would (although she is so fickle, one scarcely knows whether or not to place any confidence in her), my scheme will work out all right and in the end I hope to see the desired results." These were his thoughts as he hastily tripped up the steps at the Moore residence Saturday afternoon, gave the button at the door a quick push that occasioned Grace to answer its summons, and when informed she was all alone, he entered, seated himself and for a few thoughtful seconds, listened to the loud beating of his heart, occasioned by the excitement of the occasion.

The courage, the faith, he had once had in himself had almost forsaken him, and for an instant he dared not raise his head, but finally mastered his courage sufficiently to say: "Here I am, Grace, ready for the job."

She flitted around the room for some little time, darting here and there, then settling herself near him, her keen eyes riveted on the slip of paper she held in her hand, that contained the wording of a missive that was soon to be sent on its mission, heard Ray say after she had finished: "That is a splendid piece of head work."

Nearly an hour later it had been deposited in the post office, after Ray had tried to write a fac-simile of Hugh Carter's penmanship which read as follows:

> My Dear Miss Melton:
>
> After due and thoughtful consideration, I deem it my duty to pen you these lines. During the past few months our friendship has been gradually developing into what some might term a love affair, and for fear you might mistake it in this manner, I deem it advisable that we discontinue this warm friendship as you doubtless know I have another *very dear* and charming friend.
>
> Now hoping you will not misjudge nor misunderstand me, I am
>
> Yours Respectfully
> Hugh Carter.

The general routine of work, without any interruption, continued both at school and home, and not until after the rural mail carrier had made his regular delivery Monday, was

there any cause for any unusual worry on the part of any one.

Grace and Ray had spent many long, weary hours of anxious waiting, in order to learn what the fruits of their mean deceptive work would bring forth.

"Any letters, David?" asked Mrs. Melton, as her husband opened the door, laid the morning mail on a nearby chair, then started down the walk.

"Yes, we have a card from the Walkers, and there is a letter for Edith," she heard him say as he walked away.

"I have had a foreboding ever since the class play, that things would terminate in this manner," said Edith's mother as she held the letter in her hand, carefully examining the bold, legible script of the envelope; then mused as she laid it on the table to await its owner's return, "Edith must act sensible in this matter for much depends on these last few months of school."

In the early evening twilight, seated near the window where dainty white curtains had been carelessly thrown to one side, head resting against the window casement, hands firmly clenched, Edith had sat for some little time, trying hard to control her feelings, after having fully caught the meaning of the letter that lay on the floor at her feet.

Somehow she managed to conceal her feelings when she descended the stairs, fully determined to elude all suspicion of the effects that the letter had caused her to suffer.

But no sooner had she made her appearance in the dining-room where an appetizing meal awaited her than she was met by her mother who said: "Edith, who was your letter from?"

"Hugh," was the response.

Hesitant about mentioning its contents the mother said: "Hope my little daughter acts wisely in this matter."

Disinclined to disclose the purpose of the letter she at once sanctioned her mother's advice by saying: "Never fear, I have decided to be a complaisant old maid," and with a little toss of her proud head she softly glided out of the room, and when she returned she said: "Sure, I meant every word of it."

"Well, well," cried Guy in tones of delight; "always to be Miss Melton."

Again, in her room later in the evening with tear dimmed eyes she read and re-read the letter, gave it a toss in the direction of her dressing table and said: "I thought his composition consisted of better material than this."

Fully deciding she could rest more peacefully if she acknowledged its receipt she wrote as follows:

MR. HUGH CARTER:

Your letter just received and I assure you your request meets with my approval and at once we will discontinue our friendship and acquaintance.

However, may I say to you, continue in the way you have just started and perhaps you may have some influence for good over this friend you have mentioned.

Wishing you nothing but happiness and success,

I am

EDITH JANET MELTON.

Having arrived somewhat earlier than usual Ray possessed a curious inclination to stroll for awhile around the school campus, watching the some half dozen or more who had arrived, engaged in pleasant conversation as they neared the door of welcome, but not until after he saw Edith and Guy approach did he feel an incentive to make a hurried entry.

Quickening his pace he soon overtook them, the door responded to his strong muscular power, at which Edith entered, and without the slightest inclination to engage in conversation she quickly withdrew to her room.

As may readily be imagined she spent long weary hours that morning. Hugh she saw only once or twice and scarcely gave him a second glance. At intervals the blood would mount to the surface of her face, which kept her in constant jeopardy lest her telltale feelings would betray her.

At all events Ray felt much encouraged that his work had had the desired effect, as he noted the expression of Edith's countenance together with the non-interest she manifested in lessons: these helped further his already jubilant mood.

Now comes the time when victim number two is to have his share of the worry.

All the members of the family had assembled themselves at the table except Hugh. Mr. Carter had begun serving the plates, when he glanced in the direction of the hall where Hugh was standing, hurriedly reading and at the same time trying in a dazed manner to catch the meaning of the contents of a letter he had just received, when his father said: "Aren't you going to lunch with us today?"

"No," was the answer; then the sound of a gently closed door, steps on the walk and only a slight glimpse was caught as Hugh hurried away.

"Strange indeed are Hugh's actions, and the letter must be wholly responsible," declared Mr. Carter as he finished the serving, during which interval the savory odor of the food could in no way bring back the lost appetite.

With jaws firmly set, pained expression on his face Hugh had walked for some time, and before he was aware, had

reached the country roadside. On and on he walked until he reached a by-road that led to a little log hut, that had long since been abandoned as a dwelling place but now served in the capacity of store house for machinery.

With not a vestige in sight of any living mortal he sat down on the old stone near the door, took off his cap, mopped his face, then read the letter again.

Straightening himself up, with fists tightly clenched he said: "This is foul play and I will have revenge."

Hour after hour the little clock on the mantel announced the time of the afternoon, and not until after Emily came home from school did the parents have cause for alarm concerning their son, and his strange actions.

The human mind plays its cards quickly, at a conjuncture like this, so there wasn't a word of disapproval uttered when Mrs. Carter called her husband home from the store, ordered him to take the car and go in quest of their son whom they knew nothing about.

Mr. Carter traveled every road in and near Yorkville for nearly two hours and yet not a glimpse had he caught of Hugh.

Twilight was deepening, and oh how he dreaded the thought of returning with no information that could in any way lead to his whereabouts.

At last agitated in mind he decided to return and just as he approached the creek bridge at the outer edge of town, he was halted by a call which came from the banks of the creek. Instantly, the car was brought to a standstill and there he saw Hugh sitting on a log, weary and tired, seeking a ride with someone into town.

"Is that you, Hugh?" demanded his father.

"Yes, Dad, and I am very tired."

"Get in this car instantly and tell me who that letter was from and what it contained as it is responsible for all my worry and useless driving for the last two hours, much less to say nothing about the whole household being turned upside down in regard to its mental foundation."

Hugh willingly complied with his father's orders and at dinner satisfied a ravenous appetite as not a morsel of food had passed his lips since breakfast.

After having laid bare the real truth concerning the letter, by permitting his mother to read for herself, he then spent a very pleasant evening with Professor Pennway and returned home, feeling quite sure he had struck the right key to help unlock the mystifying letter.

The following afternoon the members of the Senior class spent some little time in letter writing; these letters were afterward delivered to the professor.

CHAPTER VI

Entrapped

AS THE weeks advanced, Ray saw with triumph that his deceptive work was telling as he had been sure it was bound to do.

It was exactly the thing he had been wont to enjoy—the saddened expression of Edith's countenance when she chanced to be thrown in contact with Hugh, together with the unconcerned attitude of Hugh, furnished no small amount of solace for his wicked heart.

Hugh was seldom seen at the church around the corner, where he had enjoyed many times the sweet voice of her who now to him was nothing more than a mere passing acquaintance. This too, helped further, the satisfactory thoughts of Ray and strengthened his advanced idea of becoming, in the near future, a very dear friend of Miss Melton's.

Nevertheless, things were gradually drifting along in channels that occasioned a sort of sweet peaceful smile to flit across Hugh's face at times, which he managed so well to conceal, both from Edith and his bitter enemy. However, he was applying himself at school, making good use of every moment of his time, for his instructor had encouraged him no little when he said: "He could now see the finished product in the end."

Professor Pennway was one of those big hearted instructors with an abundance of jolly good feeling that won for him many friends and the esteem of all who knew him. He

possessed a very keen eye of perception, and was endowed with an unusual amount of self-confidence which had been a great source of service to him throughout his professional life.

When once he made up his mind to accomplish a thing he generally met with success as he lent all his energies to that effect.

Just recently, with a very deep purpose in view, he had conducted a very rigid test of penmanship with the members of the Senior class, which furnished him with the desired material he had been seeking for some time to serve as sufficient evidence in his case.

It was on Thursday afternoon, some time after this, that the professor requested Ray to stop at the office after the dismissal hour.

Up until now, Ray had been in an unusually happy mood; always whistling or singing some lythe little ditty.

The young man who had preceded him to the office was seated at the desk, leisurely looking through a magazine, when his attention was arrested by "Whistling Ray" as he called him, who came down the hall to the office.

On entering, to his great astonishment he encountered Hugh, who scarcely recognized his entrance. The professor soon made his appearance and with his usually pleasing countenance, which was a part of his general composition said: "I have a little business to transact with you two gentlemen, but I will endeavor to make it as brief as possible."

Ray had been caught in a trap and at once dropped his head and began nervously to pull at the buttons on his coat.

"Ray," said the professor, "this little affair is somewhat unpleasant; nevertheless, I think the sooner it is settled the better for all concerned." Holding an empty envelope directly in front of Ray's face he said: "Did you ever see this envelope?"

Before Ray could answer, the professor continued by saying: "There is no doubt in my mind but what you have; now did you, or did you not? This is a chance for you to establish your innocence if you are not guilty."

By this time Ray's face was almost purple with shame: "a guilty conscience needs no accuser."

After some moments of unbroken silence, at length the professor said: "I demand of you a definite answer."

Finally, with a great degree of humiliation and hidden anger, he said: "I guess I have."

"What purpose had you in doing such an ungentlemanly act? Had Mr. Carter given you permission to use his name?"

"No," said Ray.

"Well, do you not know where people who stoop to acts of low descension, finally have their ending?

"It certainly is a sad state of affairs to know that one of the members of my Senior class of which I am so proud, would be guilty of any such actions."

Ray could not lift his head but sat with downcast eyes, and was to the two who looked on, an object of pity.

After some hesitancy and wishing to clear himself of the act, as it is always easy to place the blame on the shoulders of some one else, especially if they are absent, Ray finally said: "Grace Moore was the real perpetrator of the deed and has been the instrument of my guilt in writing this letter."

His professor then spoke to him about his associates, and their unconscious influence upon others and said: "We get out of this world just what we put into it, so if you are going to get much out it, you will have to deposit different material to this."

"Now if you will ask Mr. Carter to forgive you, and promise me this will put an end to all such work as this, we can take you by the hand and promise you we will say nothing further about it."

With voice trembling and a great degree of shame he asked them as best he could to forgive him.

Hugh walked up to him, took him by the hand: "Ray, you may thank Professor Pennway that the several members of your body are all in good working order, for I had promised myself to give you a genuine good flogging and in the wind up, a pair of black eyes to carry as a remembrance from me.

"But now, I see my folly as this is much the better way to settle the matter, so henceforth, be a man."

The two young men were then excused, each going in separate directions; one feeling that the future looked brighter and more promising and the other filled with the burning disgrace of his own guilt, and that he had been entrapped by his own web.

In a way it was a hard matter for Hugh to dismiss from his mind the thought of giving Ray Allen a sound thrashing, for he felt he could derive much satisfaction from the gratifying act.

It was a daily custom of his to stop at the post office enroute home, for the mail of the afternoon, and just as he was in the act of entering, he met Ray making his exit; neither

recognized their acquaintance and merely passed without the slightest notice of either's appearance.

Ray was so furious that by the time he reached home, he was almost ready to explode with anger, providing his father was absent — but to his astonishment he had to face another trying ordeal.

"Ray," said his father as he entered, "I have been examining your report card and I find you are falling way behind in your grades, and too, your deportment is very, very poor, so I would like an explanation from you. Are you filling your head with nonsense instead of knowledge?"

Ray replied, he did not know what the trouble was, unless he had acquired so much dislike and contempt for Professor Pennway, that he didn't care if he learned or not.

"Well, what seems to be the trouble with your professor? I have never heard one word of complaint from anyone?"

"Oh! I can tell you, if you must know," said his wife, "he has a few special pets that he lavishes all his time and skill on, and he has no use whatever for our son, so I have been told, so this is why the boy doesn't make good in school."

"Oh! I see," said the father, "perhaps I had best call on him and learn the nature of the situation, and why it is he has taken such a dislike to our son."

"Oh, no, no," said Ray, "it is all right with me as it is mutual, for I care so little for him."

"Yes, but my son, there must be some reason back of all this, as it is so unnatural for a man to take such a dislike to one of his pupils without some good cause."

"Well, he has no reason for such an attitude toward me," said Ray, but never looking in the direction of his father. However, when the opportunity presented itself, he said to his

mother: "I guess I had best be a little more studious, or some of my mischief may reach the parson's ears."

Too, he had had to confess his guilt, that evening, and this only increased his bitter hatred for Hugh and he declared he would be revenged the very first time an opportunity would present itself.

It was after dinner of the same evening, that Hugh lived over again the sensational feelings of the little episode that took place at the office, as he vividly gave Emily the full particulars of what transpired between the trio: and he finished by saying: "He must answer Robert's 'letter.' "

"Aren't you going to tell Edith all about it, and expose the guilty culprit?" said Emily as he arose to leave the room.

"No, not at present."

"Well, I am not trying to inquire into your affairs, Hugh. It's none of my business — that I know. But I just wanted to say that it seems to me it's time for you to establish yourself with her, and not be living under a false accusation any longer."

"You've expressed my sentiment exactly, and perhaps young Allen will not feel as though he has made such a striking success of his work after he learns that Edith has been informed of the true state of affairs."

It was at this point in the conversation that he became as breathless with excitement as one who comes to the last exciting scene of a movie.

Seated at his writing desk, frequently passing his fingers through his hair, leaning with his head resting on his left hand, he sat for some time musing on the past, and the whole situation of the suspense of the future, with no clue whatever of how it would all end. Yet he welcomed the introduction of

brilliant and pleasing thoughts — several times he picked up his pen to write but each time let it drop from his hand.

He found it difficult for the first time to know just how to pen his thoughts to Robert.

Robert, too, had had his share of trouble as his friend had passed away some time ago, and in his last communication he stated: "He expected to visit his grandmother in the near future." It was very evident that Hugh welcomed this intelligence for he longed to spend many hours with him, relating the ups and downs he had had to experience during the last few months.

Nevertheless, he somehow managed to write him a very interesting letter, and finished by saying: "Be sure and make your visit at your earliest convenience."

With a lighted cigar lying on his desk, and which he occasionally lifted to his mouth, gave a long draught and watched the smoke as it slowly disappeared in the room, he rocked to and fro in a semi-frenzied state of mind until all at once as quick as a flash, he softly said: "You bet, I am going to accept your advice, Emily."

With a sigh of relief he had fully decided his fate should no longer hang on the fence, and, fall which way it would, it should be decided at once.

Upon her return from school a short time after this Edith's mother delivered to her a letter.

She was tired and worn by the day's hard lessons, but the weather in a measure was responsible for her feelings as the rain had been falling all day and the air was filled with a damp chilly feeling, that makes us eager to turn on the lights in the early evening, and lower the shades in order to shut out the gloom of the outside.

So her mood was well in keeping with the inclement weather as she ascended the stairs to her room with this letter of unknown origin. Her first impulse was to comprehend the name of the sender and to her utter astonishment, she beheld attached at the bottom, H. C.

She read, re-read, and read again, but could scarcely collect her senses sufficiently to comprehend its meaning — only did she grasp the thought that he wished to call. He furthermore stated: "He seldom wrote letters and as this was his first attempt in writing her, he did hope she would be charitable in her answer by being conservative of his feelings."

"His first, his first," she kept repeating; "how can he be so untruthful, and then ask me to be conservative of his feelings?" She sat motionless for a long time, and not until she heard her mother's voice at the foot of the stairs announcing the evening meal, did she awaken from her petrified state of being.

She no sooner reached the dining-room than her mother inquired who her letter was from.

"From Hugh," said Edith.

"Yes, and I'll bet he has asked for a date," said Guy, as he sat opposite Edith at the table with his eyes fixed on an appetizing dish of fruit salad.

"Well," remarked the mother, "this must not occur too frequently, as much depends on these last few months of school."

Edith soon retired to her room, there to have a great struggle with her conscience in order to determine what would be right and to answer his note by the guidance of such feelings.

The gloom and dismal climatic conditions of the night before had all cleared away the next morning, and the sun shone so bright, it made amends for the density of fog, and of the dreariness of yesterday.

Nothing noteworthy happened until Sunday evening, when a beautiful Cadillac car occupied by Hugh drove into the driveway at the Melton home.

He felt just about as pompous on this occasion as most young men do on their wedding day, although he didn't know what the result of this visit would bring forth.

However there was one evident fact: that he did not propose to suffer false accusation longer; therefore, he solemnly resolved to expose the guilty party, but not knowing what his results would be, made the lump in his throat almost choke him as he brought his car to a standstill near the gate.

Edith was very reserved in her manner of greeting when she answered the summons of the door-bell. Hugh thoroughly understood the situation, but took no heed of her attitude toward him.

This evening was one to be remembered, as the moon was so big and round, and shed such an effulgence of light, that it made it possible to see for some little distance. They had attended church that evening, and on nearing her home, the house and its surroundings presented a beautiful sight as: "distance lends enchantment to the view."

When the car had ceased its low hum of the motor, and they were about to part for the night, Hugh stepped up, took both her hands in his and said: "Edith, how many letters have you ever received from me?"

Instantly she answered: "Two."

"Well, I beg to inform you that you have never received but one that I have any knowledge of, although you wrote me once, saying you would answer my letter which I never wrote. Tonight I am here to plead my own case and tell you I am not guilty, but Grace Moore and Ray Allen wrote you that letter."

We may well imagine Edith's feelings as she recalls how severely she has dealt with him, and given him no possible chance to explain the true nature of the whole affair to her. It surprised and touched her to have Hugh put up his hands and grasp hers. He held hers so closely in both of his as he spoke, with such a manly voice that it touched and moved her.

"Please forgive me, Hugh," was all she could say, and somehow she was freely forgiven and he retraced his way homeward in a much happier frame of mind.

As in all little country towns (and Yorkville was no exception) the greater part of the population knew about Edith's and Hugh's appearance at church that evening, before they retired for the night.

Mrs. Allen was not as comfortable as she might have been, but was determined to conceal her jealous feelings.

The shock proved almost too much for Ray, who sat with a heavy scowl on his face throughout the entire service: nevertheless the overhanging cloud that had been shadowing Hugh's happiness for many weary weeks past, disappeared on this Sunday evening mentioned, and he found warmth and comfort in the words she had spoken to him.

"Better late than never," said Hugh, after he had read Robert's letter he had received some days after this when he stated: "he would arrive in Yorkville Saturday morning."

"I've been looking forward to this visit from him for a long time," said Hugh, when his mother made inquiry as to the exact date they might expect him.

"It seems like a long time since Robert has made a visit to Yorkville," said Mrs. Carter.

"Oh, it hasn't been so long," replied her son, "for don't you remember he was here Thanksgiving with his father?"

"Well, that has been some little time, my boy."

After dinner Hugh excused himself early in the evening in order to retire to his room for study, but as he arose to go, his father said, "You have never informed me where you were Sunday evening."

"I was out at 'Quiet Dale.' "

"Well, you had best measure your steps with great precaution for Ray Allen may thwart your path again in the near future."

Straightening himself up to the full extent of his manly frame, he said, as he went through the hall: "Ray Allen will meet his 'Waterloo' if he attempts anything further."

CHAPTER VII

Robert's Visit

"I'VE POSITIVELY got to go. It is almost school time now, and will necessitate my being late unless I go on the run," said Hugh, as his mother closed the door behind him, and he hurried down the steps.

The time had passed so quickly, and she had so thoroughly enjoyed the short visit with her son that she did not realize the hands on the little clock pointed to the hour of eight forty-five. This was Friday, and Robert was coming the following morning, so with the general routine of work for the day and a few extra tasks which would include a few minor changes to be made in Hugh's room, would find employment for Mrs. Carter and the house maid until the day came to an ending.

The next morning at the railway station in Yorkville, where seldom only a few passengers alighted, stood Hugh waiting for Robert Page, who, had come to make him a visit.

"So you've come?" said Hugh, as he grasped Robert's hand.

"Yes, I didn't want to disappoint you."

"Come along, I'll be delighted to have you for my guest if you aren't too tired to listen to all I have to tell you, which is no small amount."

"Not a bit of it, for I am delighted to be here and if I can be of any service to you I am at your command," said Robert, as he picked up his traveling bag and they started for the car that Hugh had left parked just a few steps from the platform,

and in a short time arrived at the Carter home, where they were met by Emily and her mother.

The greater part of the forenoon was spent in making calls, which included a short visit with the grandmother, who could scarcely sanction his return to the Carter home to spend Sunday with Hugh, and a short call at the store, where they found Mr. Carter, summonizing all the patience he possessed as he had spent something in the neighborhood of an hour's time trying to sell a woman a rug, and who declared it was moth eaten and that he had not made a satisfactory reduction in price to compensate for the damage.

Hugh and Robert had been standing where they caught enough of the facts concerning the conversation to furnish them with a knowledge of the sale. All unnoticed by Mr. Carter they had stood for some few minutes, when finally Hugh stepped up and asked his father if he wished to speak to Robert.

"Oh, yes, yes, to be sure," and at the same time advanced and gave him a very cordial welcome. However, he informed Hugh he was very busy and he would have more time to visit with them when he came home for luncheon.

Now, before Robert came Mr. Carter had given his family due instructions as to how they would spend the Sabbath, and needless to say his wishes were carried out to the letter. He didn't want any unusual commotion or excitement in the home in their preparation for church as he had stated: the family would attend church, for he wished to leave the impression with their guest that this was nothing out of the general order of things. He was well informed as to the discipline concerning the household of his old friend, and knew that Robert

had been taught never to be disloyal to his training in regard to keeping the Sabbath, no matter whether at home or abroad.

Waiting for her husband's return from the store Mrs. Carter picked up one of the children's Sunday-school books to read, but before she got interested in its pages she heard his well known footsteps coming up the walk. Laying her book to one side as he advanced she said: "I never saw two young men enjoy themselves more thoroughly than Hugh and Robert."

"Well, I certainly am glad, but say, wife — before I retire I want to say to you, that immediately after breakfast in the morning I will go to the store as I must finish some work that I started on today, and then I will meet you there at the corner, as you go to church at about — oh, well — say about eleven o'clock, as I think I can get through by that time."

It was a beautiful early spring morning and the church bells could be heard for a long distance calling the people to the house of worship.

Contrary to her custom, Edith did not dare glance over the audience after she had taken her familiar place in the choir, for she felt sure she was being closely observed by a stranger. However, after Rev. Allen had announced the number of the first hymn and the audience arose to sing, her attention was arrested by an usher seating Mr. and Mrs. Carter.

As this was such an unusual occurrence at church, the slight commotion caused by their presence was very noticeable to both; especially, did Mr. Carter feel a twinge of displeasure as he gazed directly in the direction of the pulpit, and nervously pulled at his stubby mustache.

By the time Edith had finished her selection, and the sweetness of her voice had died away it had helped in a

measure to banish Mr. Carter's uncomfortable feelings and he was really glad he was one of the number in the audience. In after years he often called to mind this Sunday at church, and the sermon which he actually thought was intended especially for him, for Rev. Allen chose for his text: "Lay not up for yourselves, treasures on earth where moth and rust doth corrupt, and thieves break through and steal, but rather lay up treasures in heaven where moth and rust doth not corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

Many sentences fell from the minister's lips this memorable morning that sank deep into the merchant's heart, although he gave no outward signs of their impression upon him.

It was late in the afternoon of the same day, which had already marked a change in the Carter home, when a car occupied by three young people gave a loud honk as it came to a standstill in the driveway at "Quiet Dale" farm, and before Edith could appear it honked a second time for Emily was impatient as to know just how she would feel about the surprise.

Her curiosity was soon set at ease for as Edith advanced she said, "I somehow was expecting you, although I will have to admit I have been taking a siesta."

"This certainly is an inviting place and one that has many charms," said Robert, as he took Edith by the hand and at which her face heightened a little in color, as she felt his remarks were a trifle personal.

Fully grasping the thought of his remarks and catching the meaning that the other young people had implied, he more fully expressed himself by adding, "I mean the home and its surroundings are so beautiful, and would afford an ideal place for quietude and rest. Now please don't misconstrue my

meaning, Hugh,'' whispered Robert, as he laid his hand on his shoulder, as they followed Edith into the house.

It was late in the afternoon when Mr. Carter awoke from a two hours' sleep, and then arose and went in quest of his wife, whom he found seated in the living room, looking through an old album that contained some of the old family pictures, together with those of a few friends, and the one she had been studying for some little time was Robert's father's picture, that had been taken when he was about the age of his son, who was now their house guest.

''What a remarkable resemblance,'' she said as Mr. Carter entered, and she presented the picture.

''Yes; he reminds me very much of his father, and I understand their business qualities are very similar, for the last time he was here he advised me of the fact, he was going to make Robert full partner in the hardware business in the near future.

''Where are the young people, mother?''

''They have driven out to the Melton home.''

He lighted a cigar, seated himself in his big leather rocker and puffed away for some time before he said anything. Feeling that he would be more comfortable if he could give vent to his displeasure of their going, and in this way get these unpleasant thoughts out of his system he said, ''I might have known where they were without asking for I don't think I ever in all my life saw anyone lose their head so completely, as Hugh. I do wish he would take a few things into consideration before he acts unwisely in this matter.''

''Why Joe, why do you speak thus? Isn't Edith indeed, a splendid type of woman, and do you not think our son is

indeed lucky if he can gain the friendship of so noble a character?''

''Well, I suppose your point of view and mine differ in some respects; however, they are both young and they will have ample time to think of serious love affairs later on in life.''

Gently tapping his cigar on the edge of his ash tray and then settling himself back in a reclining position he finished his remark by saying, ''She is a pretty, cultured and talented young woman and perhaps these are the most essential in Hugh's ideal.''

''Joe, it must be the financial side of the subject that you have reference to; if so I wish you would dismiss it from your mind and look at things from a more reasonable standpoint. How did you like the sermon this morning?''

''Ahem, ahem — well, it was very good and, to be real truthful it was much better than I thought Rev. Allen could do.''

''He presented some very good thoughts,'' said Mrs. Carter, ''and I do hope there will be many fertile fields for the development of his truths.''

Thinking it high time to change the subject of their conversation the husband said: ''Mother, I understood Emily to say that Margaret was coming with Robert on this visit.''

''Yes, but her mother had not been well for a few days and they thought it advisable for her to remain at home.''

''When she was here during the holidays, I could see why it was she was so thoroughly absorbed in Hugh and all his interests, couldn't you?'' said Mr. Carter.

''Yes, I understood it all, but Hugh doesn't admire her.''

Every conversation has its ending and as the early spring dusk was falling they heard the chatter and merry laughter of voices of the young people entering, with another added to their party.

"We didn't imagine you would return until after church," said Mrs. Carter, "although we are pleased to see you."

They only spent a short time here, for the church was beginning to fill rapidly by the time they entered and were seated — directly in front of Ray Allen. Several times during the services he engaged in a forced fit of coughing, which caused his mother some alarm, thinking he had contracted a severe cold.

When Edith and Hugh entered the car that had been parked near a telephone pole, they saw a dark shadowed figure lurking behind it. "Somehow I feel a little fear of Ray Allen," said Edith when they were nearing her home.

"Oh, never fear, for he is a moral coward, and is only lurking around in order to cause us some uneasiness," said Hugh. "And too, he feels too deeply the rod of affliction, of his other underhand work to try anything else very soon."

The frogs that inhabited every little pool of water that had been made by the recent heavy rain were pouring forth their nightly noise, when the sound of the motor had ceased, and the car was standing at the gate, where Edith soon would make her exit.

With no man in the moon as an onlooker, for the heavens were only giving forth light to the world below from numberless stars, they stood for a short time under the starry canopy of heaven, and there Hugh received the sweet assurance that his affections for Edith Melton were not in vain.

A little later the sound of voices in the room across the hall announced to the mother her boy's return and that the young men had retired for the night. Her husband had been asleep for some time but somehow she was lying awake, waiting to know they had all been snugly tucked in bed.

And the sound of the door as it closed on its hinges had scarcely ceased before Robert said, "Hugh, you are without a doubt a lucky fellow, to win the friendship and esteem of so beautiful and talented a young woman, and I am indeed proud of you and the start you have made to be a man. There was a time when I was in grave doubt as to where you would steer your little bark canoe."

"Yes," said Hugh, "but I was saved from shipwreck by the sweet innocent young girl you heard sing tonight, and all that I am or ever hope to be I owe to her."

In the future, never again would Edith have to avoid a chance of listening to what he really had to say to her, for with the closing of this evening her heart had been thrilled by the words he had spoken and the smile which lighted his face when he bade her good night.

"Well, it has been delightful to me to be your guest for the past few days," said Robert, the following morning, prior to his visit with his grandmother.

"Oh, aren't you coming back before you return home?" asked Mrs. Carter.

"Yes, but not for any length of time, as I promised father I would make my visit short as my services are so much needed at the store. Especially at this season of the year."

Emily had heard what he had said, and was a trifle disappointed to learn his visit was almost at an end.

"Well, hello Robert, I was just in the act of calling in order to learn if you had forgotten me," said his grandmother as he opened the front door and the odor of fragrant flowers met his sense of smell.

"Now come and sit down and we will enjoy a good old fashioned visit as I am anxious to learn all about your family."

Robert did her bidding and they both really did enjoy the morning spent in conversation, that involved every member of his family, and judging by his ravenous appetite he thought she had forgotten the dinner hour.

"There never was such a dear boy," said she, as she arose to prepare the noon day meal, and gave him a pat on the head as she made her exit, and in a short time announced it was ready.

No one but a grandmother could have prepared so many appetizing dishes to all of which Robert did ample justice, as he had partaken of a very light breakfast. Not unlike all natural grandmothers she was busy all during the meal time asking numberless questions and one especially she was very curious about was, the death of his friend.

He was loath to relate all the particulars concerning her death; nevertheless he had to comply with this cultured and refined old lady's request. True enough, he did enjoy the visit with his father's mother but more fully he had enjoyed himself at the Carter home and he could not fully determine whether or not it was the society of Hugh or Emily that created an atmosphere so pleasing to him.

Wednesday morning, he received word from home saying, "His services would be needed at the store the latter part of the week."

He saw very little more of Emily during the remainder of his stay, but the question had been duly weighed and settled in his mind that he would visit Yorkville again in the near future. Just the day before he returned home he spent the greater part of the afternoon at the store with Mr. Carter, where he found him not very busy.

"I understand you are leaving us tomorrow," said the merchant, as he offered Robert a seat.

"Yes I leave tomorrow morning."

"I wish Hugh possessed good business qualities so I could make him a partner in my business, but it doesn't seem to appeal to him, so I suppose he will take up the study of law this fall."

"I think he is well adapted to the profession he has chosen," said Robert, "and no doubt but what he will meet with great success."

"Well, if he does he will have to get some of these fool love affairs out of his head," remarked the father.

"I think Miss Melton is a wonderful character," said Robert.

"Oh yes, true she is; but you see there are other things to take into consideration," and it was during this interview that Robert learned the real secret of Mr. Carter's heart, and why it was he found objections to his son being Miss Melton's best gentleman friend.

He furthermore stated the full particulars to Robert of an interview he had held recently with his son at which time he gained the information he was seeking, that Hugh was, as he termed it, losing his head over Edith Melton.

"Not at any time during our conversation, did I divulge the thought to him that I was very much displeased with his

choice, from a financial standpoint,'' said the merchant, as he scanned Robert's face, who had sat silently listening to all he had to say, and at the end of his lengthy remarks he added, ''I wish Hugh to remain ignorant of the fact as it would only make matters worse.''

Robert was a broad minded young man, and always looked on the best side of everything, no matter what the subject involved.

He was still at the store when Hugh came in after school, as he and Mr. Carter had had such an interesting subject for conversation, he had been all unmindful of how rapidly the time had passed.

''I am sorely disappointed,'' said Hugh, as they made their exit and stood outside of the store leaning back against the big plate glass front. ''I had thought you would spend your last evening with me, but I shall not insist as you have made other arrangements.''

''I too am sorry, but you understand the situation, and what a disappointment it would mean, both to my cousin and grandmother.'' After consulting his watch Robert said ''Come, we have ample time to enjoy a short walk, for we aren't expected to arrive much before the dinner hour which, I presume, is at six o'clock.''

These two bosom friends found many pleasant topics to converse on, but the chief theme of their conversation embraced their own personal affairs.

Robert did not impart to Hugh the bulk of his father's interview, that afternoon, as he deemed it advisable to withhold this intelligence.

Retracing their steps in the direction of the vine-clad cottage of his grandmother, Robert said, ''I am really glad

that you and Edith so thoroughly understand each other, and I sincerely hope and trust you meet with no further difficulties, to mar your future happiness.''

''Oh thank you, Robert, and I too am equally pleased to know our troubles and misunderstandings are at an end, but the sweetest thought I have to cherish is: that our friendship and love for each other meets with the sanction of both families.'' To this remark Robert made no reply.

When they came in sight of the cottage and saw the cousin's car standing at the front gate they hurriedly bade each other good-bye and Robert quickened his pace the remainder of the way. ''Poor Hugh,'' mused he, as he hurried on, ''he will meet many obstacles to thwart his path of happiness if he remains loyal to Edith.''

''In the name of common sense where have you been? Your cousin has been waiting for almost three quarters of an hour for your return, and here it is, almost six o'clock, which means a delayed dinner. His patience is almost worn threadbare with waiting, and it seems to me as you can only give them the last evening of your staying, you could at any rate have been on time.''

All this avalanche of speech had burst forth from his grandmother, who looked very demure in her black spring-suit, as she sat with her hat, gloves and wraps on, ready for the trip to the country.

Robert had not uttered a single word of explanation, only went directly to his room where he made some minor changes with his clothing, then announced he was ready.

The peeved little grandmother rode for some time in silence, but could not dismiss from her mind how long she had sat waiting for the gallant young man who was seated at her

side. Finally, looking Robert squarely in the face she said: "I suppose you were over at Carters', were you not?" and with a slightly drawn mouth she finished by saying, "Hugh seems to want to monopolize most of your time; now if it was Margaret here on a visit, and he was so consistent in occupying her time, I would not think so strangely of the matter, but perhaps he deems it advisable to first win the favor with you, then he will find it more easy to gain her friendship."

Robert had not said or done anything to the contrary of his esteemed grandmother's wishes until she uttered this last remark; then he said, "I think you have the wrong impression of the whole affair."

With a nod of her distinguished little head, she said, "I know you young people think old folks are not at all times responsible for all they say and do, but I can inform you they are; at any rate, I am one that can answer for herself."

Robert said nothing, but consoled himself with these thoughts; "she is like all other old people, and has grown childish, therefore I find much charity in my heart for the little lady and I know in a short time it will be all forgotten."

The next morning he was much surprised to see Hugh step into the waiting room, where he was waiting for the train. "This is very unexpected to me," said Robert, as he arose.

"Well, I've been excused from school until time for your train," said Hugh.

CHAPTER VIII

The Picture and the Pledge

"ALTOGETHER I have had a very delightful time and fully intend to return for the commencement. Poor Hugh! I am indeed sorry for him for without a doubt his father is going to do his level best to upset the friendship existing between he and Edith." This was the train of thought after Robert had deposited himself in the first vacant chair that met his eyes, and after making himself as comfortable as possible for the homeward journey gave himself up wholly to thought.

After having tried to read the morning paper but gaining no interest from its pages, in utter disgust he flung it to one side, placed a cigar in his mouth, but did not light it, only placed it there for its associations, and was lost in deep thought as the train sped on, till he heard a voice say: "I beg your pardon, I didn't mean to interrupt but you have dropped a letter."

"Thank you," said Robert as he hastily picked it up and replaced it in his pocket.

Turning abruptly and heaving a long profound sigh he said: "Do you tire of traveling?"

"Only at times," was the response. "If I feel well I rather enjoy it as a good share of my time is spent here on the cushions."

Lowering his paper to his lap and removing his reading glasses, and scanning the face of the young man very care-

fully who had been an interesting subject for study for him for some little time, he ventured to ask:

"Are you going far?"

"Only to Cleveland."

"Is your home at Yorkville? I noticed you got on there."

"No, only been there on a visit. Have you acquaintances there?"

"No, only business men, as I am a drummer and only make the town twice a year."

"Do you know Mr. Carter?"

"Oh! yes indeed, I always sell him a bill of goods."

"I have been visiting them and am returning home," said Robert.

"They have a beautiful home and I am informed they are quite wealthy, and too, he has a son I should judge — about your age," remarked the stranger.

"No, I am a trifle more than a year his senior," replied Robert as his eyes shone with sparkling interest to learn that the stranger too, was a friend of the Carters.

The time passed more rapidly for Robert after entering into conversation and he was loath to see his fellow passenger leave the coach late in the afternoon when the train pulled into a little town that he didn't fully catch the name of when the porter called it.

The remainder of his journey was spent alone wholly absorbed in his own mental self, trying to figure just exactly how many weeks and days would have to roll around before he would be returning over the same route.

"What's the matter with you this evening and what has delayed you?" asked Mrs. Carter as her husband returned

home late for dinner one evening a few weeks following Robert's visit.

"I'm surprised you don't know," he blurted out.

"How should I know? Now perhaps you will gratify my curiosity as to what that important matter was that has kept dinner waiting for you."

"Well, I can explain at once," was the snappy reply. "Two very important callers delayed me."

"Who were they?"

Jumping up from his chair he began to pace back and forth across the room without answering his wife.

"Well what has come over you, Joe? Why don't you answer my question?"

Wheeling himself around and standing directly in front of her, he said: "It is just exactly as I told you it would be, you can't go to church without you pay for the space you occupy."

"Well, why don't you answer my question and enlighten me as to who your callers were?"

"Confound the luck! it seems to me you ought to know who they were if you would stop to think."

"How do you expect me to know all the people that call at your place of business during the day?"

"Well, it was Mr. Long and Mr. Wilson. They said they dropped in to learn what amount I would pledge for the church for the coming year."

"What did you tell them?"

"I informed them I was not a member of their congregation, and I thought they had made a mistake and overstepped a little in soliciting me."

"Well, well, Joe, I'm surprised at you."

"Surprised? What about?"

"You could have subscribed a small amount — about two hundred dollars, then given a larger amount later on."

If a cannon ball had exploded at his feet it couldn't have had any more effect upon him than this statement that fell from his wife's lips.

Collecting himself so as to speak, he ran his fingers through his hair until it stood straight on his head, and with eyes snapping he demanded: "Do you think I own a mint, and all I have to do is to turn out dollars? Do you stop to consider what it costs me to run this house and my place of business?"

"Yes," was the meek reply, "but I still think we are financially able to give this amount, for you know someone must help support the gospel and, too, it is our duty to give for the children."

The heat waves that had been given off in quick succession from his face had forced the blood to that point of his body which made him look like an explosive ready to yield at any moment from inward combustion. Finally as the blood receded from his face and he began to cool off he said: "This is just the reason I have refrained from going to church — on account of the safety of my pocketbook."

The wife made no reply to this last statement as she deemed it advisable to let the subject drop for the time being, hoping all would be well in the end.

However, she heard him say as he made his exit: "I'll swear if they don't quit soliciting me I will give them a piece of my mind." Then the door went to with such a slam that it caused the articles on the mantel to rattle and tremble much as if the whole house had felt the effects of some seismic disturbance.

The twitter and song of the early spring bird from the trees whose buds were swollen almost ready to burst, the grass, and in fact all Nature was heralding the approach of spring.

The few days prior to Easter had passed and with all the glory of an Easter morn the sun softly slid out from behind a few scattering clouds to do justice to the crowning glory of the day.

Rev. Allen had prepared a beautiful Easter sermon and when Edith rose to sing she beheld an auditorium filled to its utmost capacity.

Her only ornament was a small bouquet of American Beauty rose buds, she had received the day before with a card attached bearing these words: "Your Favorite."

"This doesn't seem like Easter," said Edith, late in the afternoon after she and Guy had taken a long stroll.

"What makes you talk this way?" asked Guy. "I thought when I looked over the audience at church this morning and saw so many beautiful Easter bonnets, that it was midsummer and I was out in some big flower garden."

"Saddle our horses and we will take a ride," said Edith.

In a short time she appeared clad in a very becoming riding habit, mounted to the saddle and drew her horse's bridle rein that led them to the road down to the creek bridge and around the foot of the hill to that beautiful secluded spot — Coleman's spring.

This spring afforded an ideal place for the weary to rest, and quench their thirst at its cool refreshing stream which flowed out of a deep recess in the side of the hill where the water came trickling out between the rocks as clear as crystal, and this rustic spot deserved mention on the pages of the history of Yorkville.

The rustic seats protected by the overhanging boughs from the sun's hot rays afforded the visitors during the hot summer months much comfort and gave to them that peaceful and refreshing rest only to be obtained by a murmuring spring in a shady retreat like Coleman's spring.

On nearing the spring they saw the last car drive away.

They took many pictures of themselves and their horses, quenched their thirst at the spring, Edith gathered a huge bouquet of violets for her mother and was in the act of untying their horses when her attention was arrested by the sound of an approaching car.

"Guy, jump to your horse," said Edith, as she sprang to the saddle on Black Beauty. "It's the Carter family and we must hasten home."

No sooner had the last word passed her lips than a voice called out, "Halt" and in a moment Hugh had seized her horse's bridle rein and stood holding her a captive.

"Edith, may I have a picture?" asked Hugh.

Reluctantly she consented, picked up her horse's bridle rein and sat motionless until the kodak snapped and she heard him say: "Thank you."

Her lips uttered not a word of response but she gave him one of those sweet confiding smiles which meant volumes to him.

He had long wished to obtain a picture of her, and now that his wish had been gratified he felt supremely happy after having obtained this coveted piece of property.

Another upheaval took place in the Carter home the following week when Mr. Carter announced to his wife, that Mr. Long in company with Mr. Melton had paid their respects to

him on a second mission renewing their determination to secure a pledge for the minister's salary.

Agitated in mind and perfectly furious that they seemed so persistent he said: "Hugh can cater to the whimsical wishes of Miss Melton if he so desires, but no influence from a strip of a girl can make me go contrary to my better judgment."

So possessed he was with the idea that the influence of Edith had completely taken hold of his entire household and now was getting a grip on his purse it almost made him furious with rage.

For a few thoughtful moments silence reigned supreme, then the wife in a soft, gentle tone ventured to say: "I know you made a pledge, for you couldn't do otherwise under the prevailing circumstances."

"Yes, and I had to subscribe two hundred dollars, and that church may just thank David Melton for the donation, for he is responsible for it all. I have had a nervous chill ever since I attached my signature to that piece of paper, and I can't see how I am going to get the worth of my money by attending church once a week and spending about one hour of my time.

"Mercy sakes! wife, figure this up and see for yourself what it costs to attend church for one year. Rather expensive entertainment, isn't it? I now see why it requires such an effort to be a Christian but, nevertheless, I am real glad Hugh and Emily have acquired the habit, for after all, it isn't a bad place to be found."

Straightening herself in her chair his wife said: "Joe, don't be so miserly, but whatever you give, give it willingly, 'For God loveth the cheerful giver'."

"Oh, yes, yes, you can quote scripture, but I'm wondering how I am going to replace that two hundred dollars."

For about fifteen or twenty minutes utter silence predominated, and such a look of rage shot from his deep gray eyes that for a moment the wife feared he would fly into a temper.

At any rate he walked over to the window, stood with his head resting against the pane, hands in his pockets and spent a few thoughtful moments, then turned and in a complaining voice that was almost pitiful said: "It seems to me that one trouble follows another without intermission."

Then in an authoritative voice his wife said: "Nonsense, nonsense, Joe, quit worrying about money and get ready to retire. Tomorrow is Sunday and it means early rising in order to be at church on time; besides you will have ample time to give this matter further consideration tomorrow as it is your first pledge."

CHAPTER IX

The Commencement

THE CLOCK had struck ten some few minutes ago, and still Hugh sat poring over the contents of a book, all unmindful that the letter that lay on his desk almost directly beneath his elbow must be answered tonight.

In a short time the door opened and Emily entered at which instant her eyes caught a glimpse of the letter, and said: "Have you answered Robert's letter?"

"That, I think is my business," was the response.

"Well," she said, as a note of deep feeling came into her voice, "he expects to attend the Commencement and he asked numberless questions concerning it with the request for an immediate answer, so it is your duty to comply with his wishes."

As she arose to leave the room her prim little mouth displayed a decided pout, as she was very much displeased with her brother's attitude concerning Robert. Hugh sat quietly looking down at his book trying hard to force a laugh, then he said: "I'm very sorry, little Sis, but forgive me and I will answer it immediately, and if you so wish, I will place a special delivery stamp on it."

At last the letter was finished and at the close he said: "Come on, old boy, we'll be glad to see you."

The wobbly address was scrolled across the envelope, for his eyes had been scanning a picture that occupied a prominent

place directly in front of him instead of observing the guidance of his pen.

That night he dreamed of Commencement exercises, brilliant in splendor, also of fame that beckoned and lured him on to paths that lie in the far beyond.

At school all eyes were turning instinctively toward Hugh, as it seemed to be the general verdict of all, he would be valedictorian of his class.

He had worked with untiring energy, for his determination was to obtain this coveted place on the program. He and the professor had grown to be very warm friends and he informed Hugh he had been able to write on his papers the word, "excellent."

To be real frank there was no member of the class who could deliver the closing address in as commendable manner as Hugh Carter for he had the ability to make of himself some noted orator.

He and Ray frequently met, but only recognized their acquaintance with a very cool nod, as neither cared to cultivate the other's friendship.

A few days after this Emily was conscious of an immense surge of circulation to the surface of her face after she had listened very attentively to a letter her brother had read in which she learned Robert Page would arrive in Yorkville some few days prior to the Commencement and spend part of his time at the Carter home. Or perhaps the unusual flush on her face was due merely to the fact that he had said: "Remember me to Emily," for doubtless to say he was conjuring in his mind the thought of winning laurels in the pursuit of yet an unsought love.

There was a suspicion of veiled triumph in the smile on Hugh's face for he had won the distinguished honor of his class and only that morning had said to his father: "I suppose this honor has entitled me to a four years' course at Harvard?"

"Yes, I will make my word good, although it means a great sacrifice for me, considering the financial side of the proposition."

"You've forgotten you are a wealthy man," said Hugh as he squared himself in his chair and looked his father full in the face for a few seconds.

"I never made a bargain I didn't stick to," was the laconical reply.

"Nevertheless, it is utterly impossible for me to grant your request in regard to the amount of the check you desire, for of late it seems as though your demands for money are more frequent and the amounts more unreasonable. Why the last request would be sufficient to start a man in business much less to spend on a little Township High School Commencement. This is to the point," he conceded.

At the end of these snappy remarks Hugh arose, left the room without uttering a single word, and an hour later was standing at the station waiting for the train and in a short time saw Robert hurrying down the platform of the rear coach. This was a beginning of a week which will linger forever in the memories of this class.

The social functions, together with the Commencement exercises will occupy most of their time during the entire week, and at its close the first epoch of their lives will have been completed. One of the most brilliant and pleasing features in

connection with the Commencement was the class reception given by Janet Wilson.

The June day was far spent; Edith had contributed her services in assisting Janet preparatory to the reception, and the Wilson home, fragrant with the perfume of flowers presented a beautiful and pleasing sight.

Edith Melton was a striking brunette, one of the type with fair skin, vivid coloring, and gowned in a beautiful soft shell-pink colored satin, fashioned in long loose becoming lines, presented a most striking picture when she entered the room where her mother was seated, gently rocking to and fro.

Perhaps her most charming features were her very bright snappy, brown eyes, yet withal soft and tender in expression.

Standing directly in front of her mother, she said: "How do you like my new gown?"

"It is very becoming, my dear child," said the mother as she lifted the corner of her apron and withdrew from its hiding a small box, saying: "This is a little remembrance from your father and myself."

The precious little box was opened and there embedded in a dainty blue velvet bed was a string of real pearls.

For a few moments silence reigned supreme, then with an occasional tear drop that fell from the pretty brown eyes, descending on the mother's apron, Edith bent over, kissed the sweet face, and said; "My cup of joy is brimming full and running over."

Holding her daughter at arm's length she said: "They have enhanced the beauty of your gown, if such a thing could be possible." The next moment their attention was arrested by the sound of an approaching car, whereupon the mother left the room.

Suddenly the click of the gate was distinctly heard, then the measured tread of a man's sturdy feet resounded along the walk that led to the front porch, where Hugh caught a glimpse of Edith as she came tripping down the stairs to answer the summons of his call.

A few minutes later they stood together at the car, greeting Emily and Robert, who had been watching the beautiful figure that glided noiselessly down the walk by Hugh's side to the gate that swung open as they passed through.

It was not until Hugh returned home that evening and the two young men were closeted in their room that the whole truth came tumbling out in quick, vivid sentences. After Robert had finished Hugh sat down, feeling as though he was living and moving in a dream. Finally he said: "She did appear more beautiful this evening, and too, this splendid advice you have given is worth untold value to me. Having been guided by her sweet unconscious influence I have at last started on the right road."

The next evening after the Township High School auditorium had been filled to its utmost capacity, the members of the class had marched in and been seated in their respective places, Mr. Carter reared a little further back in his chair with added dignity after carefully scanning the prominent members of his family presented in this class.

But not until after Hugh had delivered his address to the class, which was considered a great piece of oratory by each and everyone, did Mr. Carter for the first time in his life feel ready to grant any request his son might demand.

"To be sure he must take up the study of law at all hazards," said he to his wife after they had fully discussed the program of the evening and decided that two famous stars

were dwelling in their infancy, for Edith too had both astonished and delighted her hearers.

"I was never so tired in my life," declared Emily, as she flung herself into the first chair she came to in the dining-room after serving Robert with a glass of cold lemonade.

"I am truly thankful school days are over," said she as the events of the past week passed before her mind as she sat at her dressing-table a little later disengaging her hair; smoothing out the long tresses that lay carelessly over her shoulders, and gazing into her mirror her eyes sparkled with new light at the thought "I never knew he cared for me."

That night she had an occasion to write in her diary many beautiful, tender, loving thoughts.

"Glad to have something to do to put in the tedium of waiting hours, for it is a custom of mine never to retire until my doors are securely locked and barred for the night," said Robert's grandmother as she opened the door for Robert.

"I'm sorry, Grandma, to have kept you up so late, and I should by all means have taken the night key," said Robert as he hastily removed his coat, carefully hung it on the back of a chair, then went in quest of some apple pie he had sampled at the evening meal.

Distinctly he heard the click of the key in the door as she said: "Must have had a lengthy program, for it is almost midnight."

He was so full of laughter he could scarcely conceal his mirth and fortunately for him he was in an adjoining room, but finally mastered himself sufficiently to say: "Yes, it was lengthy but a splendid program."

The next morning at breakfast, Ray Allen stated that Hugh Carter would attend Harvard University, Edith Melton

would go to Chicago, and looking his father full in the face said: "What university am I going to attend?"

"That all depends on your future conduct," was the reply.

"Your name has been connected with no few questionable characters, and some very ungentlemanly acts during the past school year and I think the best place for you is at home, if you expect to continue in this wise," said his father. "Your professor informed me that it was a hard pull for you to pass with your class, and I see no good reason had you applied yourself why you couldn't have passed with honors."

"Don't talk about honors, they were all awarded to Miss Melton and the honorable Mr. Carter," remarked his wife.

"There is no doubt in my mind they deserved all the honors they received," was the minister's reply.

"Don't worry, Ray," she said, after her husband had left the room. "Don't worry, dear child, leave it all to me. I'm sure I can put things straight. I'll talk to your father — I'm certain he'll do what I ask and give you a college education."

He looked at his mother in a confidential way and said: "If you do, I'll give him my word I'll never get into another scrape, although it would be gratifying to even up with Hugh Carter and it may be that I will some day."

"Hush, hush, Ray. Your father is sitting in the living-room and has heard all we have said."

By no means or signs did he appear interested in the foregoing conversation, but kept his eyes fixed on the morning paper that he held in his hand.

"Have you heard anything concerning the present you sent Hugh?" asked his mother in an undertone.

"No, not a word, but I am quite sure he got it for I watched him leave the post office with it"; continuing, he said: "He is rather a shrewd fellow and I doubt if I ever hear one word from it."

"Altogether, Ray, it was rather a clever piece of work and I am sure he was furious with rage when he received it," said his mother.

"Did you write or type the wording of the card attached?"

"Oh! we fixed that so it would be utterly impossible for him to learn of its origin. Grace typed the card, also the address on the package."

A table filled with beautiful presents stood in Hugh's room, for many in number were the costly tokens of remembrance together with words of congratulation that had come from many admiring friends both far and near.

With the exception of one they were proudly displayed for Robert's inspection the following day.

Unknown to anyone, Hugh had secretly climbed to the loft of the garage and there deposited a pair of old rusty skates which would in all probability remain hidden for years and years to come.

CHAPTER X

Vacation

THE FIRST of the week the town was proclaiming by its street decorations the arrival of the street carnival.

All night long the constant hammering, together with the roar of engine of the truck, loud in the natural stillness of the night, interrupted the peaceful rest of many residents. To Emily it had been a long night, for with her mind filled with the memory of Robert's visit and the constant passing of the trucks loading and unloading, she felt somewhat weary the next morning, having obtained but little sleep.

Mr. and Mrs. Carter in speaking of Robert's noticeable attention to their daughter both admitted it met with their approval, but more especially was it a source of deep pleasure to the former as he recalled the wealth of the Page family, when thinking of the possibilities of his daughter's future welfare.

When morning dawned the town revealed a transformation, for the streets around the square were a solid mass of newly erected booths, a merry-go-round, tents, Ferris wheel, and in fact everything imaginable that would in any way attract the attention of the crowds that would throng the streets every night during the entire week.

That Hugh was lavishing his entire affections on Edith was becoming more evident to Mr. Carter every day and just what to do in order to cause a break in their friendship had been a puzzling matter to the merchant for some little time.

"Why couldn't it have been Miss Melton instead of Grace Moore," he said to himself, after he had sat listening to his wife relate all she knew concerning Grace Moore's elopement with the motor cycle rider who performed so many daring and dangerous feats during the carnival.

"Well, wife, I now see that Hugh acted wisely when he severed all ties of friendship with her, but he was no sooner off with one love affair until he was on with another which to my mind the latter seems the more serious."

"Oh, never fear, Joe, they are just good friends; besides you know I somehow sanction Hugh's selection, for without a doubt her sweet unconscious influence has been the means of making him a much better man."

It was some moments before he spoke, then he had a pleasing smile on his face which softened the stern features and really made him appear quite pleasant to the wife. As he drew a little nearer to where she was seated, gently rocking to and fro while she finished some of the week-end mending, he said: "Hugh has been such a splendid fellow and has been living such a commendable life for the past few months I believe he is deserving of a fine trip during his vacation. What do you think about it, wife?"

"Oh, that is a capital idea and I am quite sure he would at once jump at such a chance."

"Well, you may talk the matter over with him and if he accepts our proposition we can decide when and where he will go at an early date."

It was not until the little white ivory clock on the mantel chimed the hour of midnight that the merchant fell asleep for his mind had been too busy and his heart too happy to think of rest. He had performed the first part of his act with perfect

success and had at once been successful in winning her to his cause, all unmindful of his deep purpose and motives in proposing this splendid outing for Hugh. His last consoling thought before he fell asleep was: neither his wife nor his son could read his innermost thoughts and lucky for the old gent they couldn't or he would have found a genuine balk.

Mrs. Carter and Hugh had held many communions together that no one else knew about, and he had had the assurance that she would do anything possible for his happiness and future welfare.

The days came and went as fleeting as the sighing winds which afforded many golden opportunities for Hugh and Edith to enjoy the companionship and association of each other.

College days were fast approaching and with them comes a separation in which the music of a bird-like voice will be missed, for no matter how care-worn or weary you might be you'd only to listen to one of her songs, and these feelings would flee.

One evening as they were driving they neared the Coleman spring just before the sun had spent its last lingering rays on the over-hanging boughs. They stopped at the spring, quenched their thirst, with the cool refreshing stream, then seated themselves on one of the rustic benches for a short time with all the solemnity that a secluded spot like this could afford, and with the twitter and chatter of birds around them, they pledged their true and abiding love for each other.

As they arose to go and still holding her hand, Hugh said: "Edith, with one exception, I consider this the happiest time of my life."

"What is that, Hugh?"

"It will be when I shall triumphantly lead you to the altar in the Church Around The Corner at Yorkville and there where I gave my heart to God claim you as my bride."

They had only driven a short distance from the spring until they came face to face with Robert and Emily.

"In the name of common sense," said Hugh as he brought his car to a standstill, "how does this happen?"

"I thought you were in Cleveland."

"I was yesterday," was the reply.

"Well, anyway I am glad to see you, old boy, for it saves me writing you a long letter tonight. Drive your car over by the side of the road and I will explain why I wanted to see you so much." Without further remarks Hugh stated all the particulars of their proposed trip that would take them through Kentucky, including a visit to the Mammoth Cave and other places of interest and finished by saying: "Father has purchased a new Ford roadster for the trip."

"That will be great sport," ejaculated Robert, "and I am ready to start at any time."

He spent several days in Yorkville on this visit and felt very grateful that he was so fortunate to possess such a fine and cultured grandmother with whom he could make his home while on these frequent visits.

The residents of this town like most other country towns spent their vacation in divers ways, so it didn't take long for a few golden months filled with picnics, fishing expeditions, summer Chautauquas to pass, so now we find ourselves almost suffocating with the intense heat of the last days of August.

Everyone is feeling the effects of the drought as it has been some little time since old Mother Earth has had a good old-fashioned refreshing rain.

Just at this time, when we have these long, hot sultry days and the breezes are laden with the intense heat it is then the locusts send forth their uncanny noise that gives us a creepy feeling, and reminds us more frequently of our discomfort concerning the heat.

Mr. Carter is wearing one of those smiles that won't rub off for he thinks he has really accomplished a very shrewd piece of head work for he has racked his old brain all summer trying to decide on some definite scheme that would take Hugh out of Yorkville for a while, so everything possible has been done for the pleasure and comfort of these two young men, who will start early Monday morning.

When Edith awoke Sunday morning the sun was streaming in through her windows and the little birds were singing so loud that it annoyed her, for she didn't feel rested from her night's sleep as she possessed a sad and lonely feeling and couldn't tell why, unless it was to be the last time she would be with Hugh for some time and perhaps the last time she would see him before she went to Chicago.

Nevertheless she arose, bathed her face many times, but all the while she couldn't keep back the tears that seemed so determined to flow down her cheeks.

While these thoughts were going through her mind she hastily dressed for breakfast; yet all the experiences of the vacation made the girl contemplate.

She was in no mood to sing this morning and sing she could not. It was a hot summer morning and with no breeze stirring to temper the torrid atmosphere, it furnished a good excuse for many vacant seats at church. Quite a few members of the congregation were away on their vacations, but the Carters were all occupying their respective places.

Mr. Carter was trying to get the worth of his money, so it made no difference — heat or cold was all the same to him, for he thought the only way to get the benefit of his pledge was to attend church.

Rev. Allen made no mention of the omission of Edith's selection only announced the hymns for the morning service, at which everyone thought he had overlooked the best part of the services.

He took for his text this morning the following: "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" or "What can a man give in exchange for his soul?"

He dealt directly with the hoarding and greed for money and hurled no few missiles in his statements directly at Mr. Carter, or at any rate they went straight home to him as he felt they were aimed at him, so this sermon along with others Rev. Allen had delivered had the desired effect.

He had never heard the text dealt with in this manner and its truths sank deep into his heart and furnished food for thought for many days to come.

He now began to realize he could not hope to obtain heaven with his hand firmly gripping his pocket book, for his sole aim in life had been to gain and hoard treasures of this world. He had very little to say to his family during the dinner hour, and after reading a while in the afternoon and gaining no interest or solace from his perusal he decided to take a walk and thereby give himself better opportunity for meditation.

"Mother" said he, "I am going for a little walk, but will be back before luncheon and I may stop at the store a short time on my return."

"All right, you may walk if you so desire, but as for myself, I am going to try and be as comfortable as I can here at home for this heat almost suffocates me."

He went to the hall, picked up his Panama and started out. He was going somewhere but he didn't know where.

The one vital thing that was gnawing at his heart was, he had been the means of Hugh and Robert taking the trip that was to have its beginning in the morning and the main and only reason of it all was to come between Hugh and Edith.

He was thoroughly convinced he had done wrong but it was too late now to stop it without exposing his mean incentives.

By that time he had walked to the old pond on the premises of Deacon Jones, and sitting near the pond of old stagnant water protected from the hot rays of the sun by the boughs of an old spreading oak he made a solemn declaration that: if the boys get back home unharmed from this trip never again will Hugh's father be guilty of any such actions.

Contemplating over the serious experience of the day he mused: "I too am very much pleased with my son's choice of the feminine sex, for if she pleases him I am quite sure she will suit me."

He arose, took out his handkerchief, mopped the perspiration from his face, looked at his shirt sleeves that were dripping wet, and said: "It was hard work, but I feel much better mentally and spiritually." He had made a full surrender of his greed for gold, while sitting there on the banks of the old familiar pond, and could return home to his family a changed and better man which in due time they would discover.

As he retraced his steps he hummed that old familiar hymn:

"Take my life and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee,
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold."

His wife was still sitting in the yard when he returned and the first she knew of his presence was when she felt his hands laid gently on her shoulders, when he asked: "Where is Emily?"

"Oh Joe, you frightened me! but Emily and Robert have gone with Hugh and Edith this afternoon and they are going to eat their lunch at Coleman's spring, then drive into church this evening."

"Well, wife, these four young people do certainly enjoy themselves, and don't you know it recalls to my mind our young days and many incidents connected with our little love affairs."

"Yes; but Joe, you had rather a hard row to hoe as you recall all the opposition you had to encounter as my father was so bitterly opposed to you, and you know it was all because you were a poor boy and I the only child of wealthy parents. It was not that my father found any fault with you as a man for such was not the case, it was all on account of money, and I do earnestly and sincerely hope and trust that we may never lay such a stumbling block as this in the way of our children if they are only fortunate enough to find some good worthy companion, regardless of dollars and cents."

"Yes, yes, wife, I agree with you, for after all there is much to take into consideration besides money," at which statement she almost fell from her chair.

She was adding fresh fuel to the fire by her last remarks but was wholly unconscious of it for she didn't know where

he had been or what his thoughts were; while he had been sitting out on the banks of the old pond, nevertheless, they had the desired effect upon him and he felt so guilty that he found an excuse to enter the house in quest of a drink of cold lemonade. Just about the same time they were having their heated controversy concerning riches four young people, in whom they both had a deep interest, were sitting near Coleman's spring, enjoying the dainty and delicious refreshment that had been prepared by the girls, all unconscious of any impending evil or misfortune that might befall them.

Had you been permitted to enter Rev. Allen's home at this time, and wend your way up to Ray's room, you would have found him very busy, but carefully and hurriedly collecting his belongings.

None of his family knew anything about his plans or when or where he was going, as they didn't know he was contemplating leaving home.

He had watched all the proceedings of Hugh and Edith all summer with a jealous eye and had made a solemn vow to get even with Hugh no matter what the cost might be. He fully intended to be present at Christian Endeavor, but by the time his father had finished his evening discourse he expected to be many miles distant from Yorkville.

He had lived a rather shiftless life all summer and had manifested no inclination to work, as this was wholly out of his line of business. He had often expressed a desire to attend the State University of Illinois but his father had never made known to him what his decisions were concerning his future education.

Had he been endowed with the right principles he would have found a willing father ready to make any sacrifices necessay to help further his education.

He and Tom Moore had been in company too much during his vacation for his own personal good, and all the admonitions from his father fell like drops of water from a duck's back: all without avail.

The unconscious influence that Tom Moore possessed was having its lasting effects upon Ray and was dragging him down to a lower level of things.

The air was close and sultry on this summer evening, so Rev. Allen said: "I will make my remarks brief."

When he arose to deliver his sermon he noticed Ray was not a member of his audience but gave himself no special uneasiness, but decided the young man would give an account of his whereabouts when he came home.

The four young people heretofore mentioned arrived at the church happy in mind, buoyant in spirit, for without a doubt they had spent a most enjoyable evening, and not until goodbyes had been said and each started for their respective places of abode was their cup of joy turned to sadness.

The new Cadillac, resplendent in beauty, that had occupied a prominent place in the Carter home only a short time and tonight had been parked near the church, was nowhere to be found after Hugh and Edith had walked up and down the walk several times trying to locate it.

Hugh sat down on the church steps, clasped his hands tightly together in his lap for a moment in thought, then lifting his head said: "The quicker it is over with the better I will feel, but Dad will be perfectly furious."

With pallor of face and unsteady voice Hugh approached his father saying: "Edith is waiting at the gate and to make my errand as brief as possible, I must say, I suppose our car has been stolen."

Thinking when he had finished that he would hear a volume of explosive terms and a genuine upheaval he waited a few moments and then the clear, calm, composed voice of his father startled him when he said: "This is a sad state of affairs, but there is no cause for such excitement." After the family had assembled and Edith had been invited to join them in the hall, Mr. Carter stated that he had done all possible to lead to the arrest of the thieves, after leaving the telephone communicating with the officials of all the near-by towns.

Mr. Carter's actions so greatly astonished his family that they stared first at one and then the other in great amazement. It didn't take news of this kind long to spread with great rapidity so it wasn't long until everyone in town and much of the surrounding country had learned the intelligence of the stolen car.

All unmindful that anything unusual had occurred or that his son at that moment was a fugitive from justice, Rev. Allen, with his Bible gently tucked under his arm preceded his family a few paces and reached home first.

Immediately he went directly to his son's room and there beheld a disorderly confusion of things which indicated its former occupant had taken an abrupt leave of absence.

Standing in the door stock-still and muttering something scarcely audible his wife found him wholly unable to master his feeling sufficiently to offer any advanced theory concerning the whereabouts of their son.

The father's portion was a long and sleepless night for sleep was out of the question. It was no wonder the silver threads were becoming more numerous, scattered throughout his deep black hair, for Ray in a measure was responsible for their appearance.

The news of the stolen car together with the disappearance of Tom Moore reached the parsonage the following morning, which caused Rev. Allen to be threatened with a nervous breakdown. He immediately completed his arrangements to spend the remainder of the month with his brother and family at their beautiful country home near Marion, Ohio.

A whole week has passed and yet no trace of the car, nor apprehension of the thieves has been gained. Hugh and Robert had delayed their trip for some few days, thinking perhaps on account of the reward offered the car would be recovered. But the following Monday morning before the sun had risen far above the tree tops of Yorkville and had spent its entire force on the mercury, the new Ford roadster occupied by two handsome looking young men, drove away from the Carter home.

There were many good-byes, plenty of advice as to precaution and safety with requests to write often and keep the family well in touch with them at all times.

Three or four days had passed bringing no news of the car, so reluctantly Mr. Carter stated to one of the clerks in the store late one afternoon: "I have about given up all hopes of recovering the car, or that the thieves will be apprehended." In a short time he went over to his desk and for the first time since the afternoon spent at the pond had he found any time for deep thinking, for the hurry of packing and departures together with the excitement of the stolen car had not only

kept him but his entire household in the state of turmoil for more than a week.

After lowering the window shade a trifle in order to shut out the hot sun that was streaming through and falling directly on his desk, he seated himself in his chair, pulled another up for his feet to rest on, threw himself back, closed his eyes and was then lost to all his present surroundings.

He went back to the time of the class play and lived the whole time over again up to the present, studied the whole condition of his family, both past and present, noted the marked degree of change and wound up by giving vent to his feelings by saying: "She is responsible for all." At which one of the clerks immediately inquired, saying: "Did you wish to speak to me?"

Jumping up and pulling at the leg of his trousers he said: "Oh, no, no, I must have been dreaming."

Suddenly, moved by an irresistible impulse he arose and left the store, went directly to the post office and there received a long letter from Hugh.

"This is really gratifying," he soliloquized after he had learned of the pleasure and enjoyment the two young men were having; then said: "It wasn't a bad proposition, after all."

"Have you any news concerning our car?" asked his wife when he returned home.

"No; but I have a letter from Hugh."

"From all I can understand they are enjoying themselves immensely and are always on the lookout for Ray Allen and Tom Moore," said Mrs. Carter smilingly, after she had read the letter.

"I wouldn't mind capturing them myself," joined in Emily, "then I would get the reward."

Glancing over the dinner table where they were seated, her father said: "Tomorrow their freedom may be wrenched from them leaving them with nothing to live for, nothing to hope."

Tom Moore had cultivated a generous supply of bitter hatred for Hugh because he had ceased all acquaintance — severed his friendship with his sister Grace. Ray disliked him because he had striven to make of himself a man of noble character and won the esteem and friendship of the beautiful and accomplished daughter of Mr. Melton.

The foregoing reasons were responsible for the disappearance of Mr. Carter's car.

They were like the hunted fox, they turned hither, thither in their flight to avoid being overtaken and captured.

Driving at night, sleeping through the day in some remote place, stealing their gas from farmers and those who happened to live along their route of travel was the life of these two fugitives from justice for almost two weeks, and yet no trace of them could be ascertained.

More than once they had said: "I would like to know what some of the old loafers of Yorkville would give if they could capture us and get the reward."

Nevertheless, they didn't wish to satisfy their curiosity sufficiently to justify them in returning home in order to learn what the residents or their families thought of their recent conduct.

Hugh and Robert had spent the greater part of the time allotted for their trip so now we find them wending their way back toward the rushing waters of the Ohio river, that sweeps

in many graceful curves and attracts many to its banks on account of beautiful historic scenery, dotted here and there along its peaceful borders.

The last letter had been received from Mrs. Jackson prior to Edith's departure as only a short time would elapse before she would bid a fond adieu to her pets on the farm and take up her residence of abode in the Windy City.

She was profoundly fond of Nature so had taken a long ride that morning and spent some little time at the dear old spring.

As she arose to remount her horse she took a long and lasting view of this spot, and with a deep sigh mingled with an occasional tear drop she bid it farewell.

With her hat tucked under her arm she came galloping in, rode up to the gate and inquired about the mail.

"Where have you been?" inquired the mother.

"Oh, just out for a ride. Did I get a letter?"

"Yes."

"Will you please bring it to me, mother?"

She drew her horse up under the shade of an old locust tree that stood in the driveway and there she sat until she had read this letter; then in a loud voice called to her mother and said, as a happy laugh rang out in her voice: "The boys will be home Saturday evening."

This was Thursday and not a drop of rain had fallen since they left, and in fact there had been no signs of rain until Thursday evening when the clouds began to form in the west and obscure the setting sun.

Some time during the night the gentle rain began to fall and when morning dawned it showed no signs of relenting, but continued through the remainder of the week with only short

intervals between the downpour until Saturday found everything flooded.

"This is some dark rainy night and I could sleep better if I knew where the boys were," said Mr. Carter to his wife, whom he found sitting on the porch when he returned from the store.

"I have been sitting here waiting for you and, too, thinking perhaps they might drive in any moment."

The patter of rain against the window together with the sighing and moaning of the wind produced a sleepless night for Mrs. Carter, for her ears were all attention listening for the well known call of her son.

Sometime during the night she was alarmed by the constant ringing of the telephone. In a stage of hysterical excitement she aroused her husband who hurried to answer its summons. At once he recognized Robert's voice, at which instant he began to shake like he had a chill and it was some few seconds before he could master himself sufficiently to talk, nevertheless he caught the words as they fell from Robert's lips: "We have had an accident, Hugh is hurt, don't know how serious, come at once."

After the receiver clicked, his knees smote together, and weakened in strength he had to sit at the foot of the stairs for a while before he could assure himself safe landing at the top. With knees trembling he managed to get to the hall, and imparted the news of the accident to his wife.

It would be at least two hours before dawn would appear in the east, and a dense fog that had gathered during the night helped to intensify the gloom of the approaching morning.

The accident occurred about 9:00 o'clock P. M. Saturday, forty miles from Yorkville, near a little town called Hillview.

They had stopped for gas and water and were driving trying to reach home against tremendous odds.

Shortly after leaving this village, as they were ascending a steep hill, a large touring car appeared over the top, Hugh's first impulse was to steer just as far as possible to the right, for the big car was coming with so much speed and seemed to the boys directly in front of them. The hill was slippery and in another instant the car gave a lurch and hit the Ford roadster and sent it sprawling into the ditch, but the driver made no attempt to stop and render any assistance to the injured.

After some time Robert managed to crawl out, bedaubed with mud and water, unharmed, only suffered a few scratches, but he had a serious time to disengage Hugh who had suffered a broken limb together with cuts and bruises and was lying in a semi-conscious state of mind.

Robert summoned help from a near-by farmhouse where Hugh was taken and everything possible that medical aid could do had been done to relieve his sufferings.

CHAPTER XI

After the Accident

RESTING quite comfortably in a neatly and somewhat attractive bedroom on a bed furnished with spotless white linen, Hugh began smiling when he heard the well-known voice of his father as he entered this home that had shared all their comforts with the unfortunate youth, and in an agitated voice he said: "How is my son resting by this time?" In another instant he was ushered into his presence and after grasping his hand for a moment he said: "Well, my boy, judging from the appearance of everything, your accident couldn't have happened at a better place."

After holding a consultation with the attending physician, learning it would be impossible to remove Hugh for some little time, he then delivered many orders and instructions to the nurse who had scarcely been with the patient long enough to learn the true situation of the case.

Notwithstanding the fact that his father had done all possible that money could do to help further a speedy recovery, he couldn't restrain the tears that seemed determined to flow when Robert and his father took him by the hand late Monday evening and bade him good-bye.

Standing in the flower garden with an armful of fresh asters and taking a general survey of everything, Edith's attention was arrested by the well-known voice of Emily who preceded Robert some little distance as they came down the walk to the house early the next morning.

The first to greet her ears was an interrogative from Emily who said: "When do you go to Chicago?"

"I will leave Friday afternoon," was the answer.

"Can't you postpone going until next week?" asked Robert, "and perhaps by that time Hugh will be home."

"I think it doubtful as all arrangements have been made for me to start Friday; besides mother has written the Jacksons to this effect."

Vividly a full account of the accident, together with the exact condition of Hugh, was stated by Robert who noticed the pained expression on Edith's face as she said: "It is too bad, but I suppose it was unavoidable, so whatever our lot, be it pain or joy, we must be content."

When they drove away leaving Edith standing by the gate she held in her hand a letter with the old familiar handwriting across the envelope which read as follows:

DEAR EDITH:

I am sending you this note by my faithful old friend, for I know you have worried no little concerning me; but cheer up, as it could have been much worse. When I regained consciousness my first thoughts were of you and the possibility of your going away without seeing you.

I am out in the country, but have found good friends who have done all possible to make me comfortable; nevertheless, I assure you I am expecting to see you before you leave as I think I may come home the latter part of the week.

Father and Robert are going soon, so I must hasten and close by asking you to write me a long

letter telling me all about yourself and state the exact date of your departure.

I am always yours,
HUGH.

Address, Hill View, Ohio,
c/o T. C. Hill, R. F. D. No. 3.

She thoroughly devoured every word this little missive contained, covered its pages with no few tear drops for her heart was almost broken. After the answer had been written, sealed, and addressed she hastily made a few requisite changes in her dress, announced to her mother as she passed out of the house "I am going to the post office" and was soon seen perched on Black Beauty galloping away toward Yorkville.

"Has the mail come yet?" asked Hugh, Wednesday morning, an hour or two before the usual time of the rural delivery, when he was informed it wasn't time for the mail.

Again in a short time it re-occurred to him to ask the same question, and was again informed to the same effect, at which his nurse said: "You must be expecting some very important mail."

"I am," replied Hugh.

It wasn't long until she left the room and when she returned she smiled and said: "I suppose this will call for miles of smiles," as she handed him a very neatly addressed envelope.

After reading it he tucked it under his pillow, and some time during the afternoon he gave it a second reading, then soon became restless and discontented. Calling the nurse to his bed and carefully scanning the expression on her face as

he asked a question; he said: "Will I be able to go home Friday morning?"

"No, I think not. The doctor said this morning he didn't think it advisable for you to go for some time."

"But, I am going."

"How are you going if the doctor has advised otherwise?"

"I can be taken in an ambulance," was the decisive answer.

"What has made you so restless, Mr. Carter?"

"Oh, nothing special, — only decided to go home."

She took his temperature early in the evening and learned he showed symptoms of rising temperature, and turning to him she said: "For a speedy recovery much will depend on the way you conduct yourself, as quiet and rest are the most essential in your case."

Later in the evening he called her to the bed a second time saying: "Will you please call my parents, for I wish them to come tomorrow?"

"Yes, if you think it best," was the reply.

The barking of a big Newfoundland dog and the honk of a car announced the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Carter early in the forenoon the following day when they found Hugh very nervous and discontented.

"I am very sorry, but I couldn't sanction anything of the sort," said the Doctor, after Mr. Carter had used all his persuasive powers urging him to grant his son's removal.

Again later in the day he was consulted in regard to the matter a second time and again he said: "I hate refusing you, but it would be contrary to my better judgment although this is your own personal affair, so if you deem it advisable and you

can secure the services of the nurse, as I consider her especially good, in an ambulance he could probably make the trip without much danger.

At once everything in connection with the homeward bound trip that was needed to complete their arrangements was put into operation, but when told they couldn't secure an ambulance until Friday afternoon it seemed a disappointment too great for Hugh.

"And her train leaves at four-thirty P. M.," he mused: determined not to be detained by any such petty hindrances, Hugh said: "Father call an ambulance from home."

"Capital idea, my son, and your orders shall be obeyed."

With a speed exceeding any former record the ambulance made the trip and soon started on its return with the injured young man and the nurse, the father and mother following in another car.

They would have reached home about two o'clock in the afternoon if the driver of the ambulance had used a little more precaution, but instead he neglected oil and consequently burned out a bearing which meant a delay of several hours.

The anxious time spent in waiting can scarcely be described although they meant to Edith a departure without good-bye and to Hugh a sore trial of disappointment and to Mr. Carter a cupful of remorse.

The smoke from the train that bore Edith away had scarcely died away in the distance until an ambulance with a car driving close in the rear made their appearance in Yorkville and soon parked directly in front of the Carter residence.

"I feel much better than I have at any time since the accident," said Hugh after he had been gently laid on his

dear old bed and inhaled the fragrance of the roses that Edith had delivered that afternoon enroute for the station.

"I knew you were coming home, my son, if it had required your Dad to walk and carry you every jump of the way," said Mr. Carter, as he stood at the foot of the bed anxious to learn if he could render any further assistance in order to make Hugh more comfortable.

By this time Hugh had been made to feel everybody and everything around the home was ready to do his beck and call. Edith was many miles distant, still speeding on with no end of her journey in sight. It was perhaps half to three-quarters of an hour late when the train pulled into the Union Station at Chicago.

"I am very sorry to have kept you waiting," said Edith as she passed through the gate, and her hand was being tightly held by Mrs. Jackson, who seemed overjoyed that the young lady who seemed more like a daughter than anything else had arrived.

"Will your folks be anxious about you?" asked Mr. Jackson, as he advanced and gave her a warm greeting. Then the trio started home.

She found her new home beautiful and commodious and the tall gray stone mansion was all so very unlike her own little quiet home with its flowers, birds, bees and pets that she wasn't real sure she was going to be contented here.

Tired and weary from her journey she sought her own apartment early in the evening after having tried in vain effort to make herself an agreeable conversationalist. The air off the lake cooled and soothed her flushed cheeks as she sat by the window that had been thrown wide open to admit the nightly breezes that were blowing at a high rate of speed.

Words were utterly inadequate to express her feelings when she arose from the window, tried the best she could to write two letters, one to Hugh and one to her parents, without divulging a twinge of loneliness.

On the path of flight of time day after day, week after week the amazing rapidity with which Hugh recovered steadily increased until he had gained sufficiently in strength to enable him to enter Harvard University. During the lapse of recent time many unexpected happenings had taken place: among them was Rev. Allen's resignation.

The letter stated his general health was much improved but after due and careful consideration he deemed it best to seek a new field of labor.

The few weeks following his resignation brought nearer the holiday season in which the characters of our story are looking forward to with heightened desire, enriched by the thought of the reuniting of family circles.

To the casual observer students are running along in a monotonous groove, visionarily scenting the black curling smoke of the big locomotive as they board the train that will carry them back to "Home Sweet Home."

CHAPTER XII

The Capture of Two Thieves

DURING the first few weeks that followed after the holidays, it seemed rather a difficult task for each and everyone to settle back to their old daily routine of work.

Mr. and Mrs. Melton were agreeably pleased with the marked progress Edith was making and with what rapid strides she was gaining in the musical world, that they could now see the dawn of their long cherished hopes materialized.

Shortly after Edith's departure they received a long letter from Rev. Allen, filled with grateful thanks and sincere appreciation of their Christmas remembrance and also stating he had never heard one word from Ray.

This Christmas present for Rev. Allen had been selected and purchased by Mr. Melton himself and not until it was ready to be sent on its mission, did he make known to his family his intentions of remembering his old pastor.

Kind words and kind wishes although they seem small.
Yet, they have a deep meaning that appeals to us all.

A few weeks later Mr. Melton hurried home from Yorkville to inform his wife that Mr. Carter had heard that Ray Allen and Tom Moore had been arrested in the southern part of Tennessee.

A deputy sheriff had called to see Mr. Carter and he had been convinced beyond all doubt that they had the right parties lodged in jail.

After Mr. Melton had stated all the particulars he knew concerning the case, Mrs. Melton asked, "Has Mr. Carter sent any word to Ray's father?"

"No, I think not," said he, "what would be the need of causing him a lot of worry and unnecessary anxiety until they find out for a certainty that they are the right parties.

"Mr. Carter told me this morning 'that he felt very sorry for Ray's father but added, he sure would like to see those two young gents get what was rightfully due them.' "

"Well, David, if it be true that they have them in custody, do you think they will be sent to the penitentiary?"

"Now, wife, I can't say as to that, but I rather think Ray Allen might escape on account of his age, but I believe I am right in saying that Tom Moore will be sent up for a while, and don't you know that I think it is just where they both ought to be."

"Certainly so; but David think of Ray's father and how hard he has striven to make something worth while out of him, and now to me this seems rather poor recompense."

"True enough, but mother's youngsters these days don't have much respect for the ones to whom they owe much gratitude.

"It just seems to me that they are as different as day is from night, to what they were when you and I were growing up.

"For an illustration, just let me relate to you what I saw this morning as I was riding out of town:

"My attention was attracted by the loud yells of a child and on looking around I saw Mrs. Johnston trying to drag that young son of hers into the yard.

"I rode on mechanically and let Black Beauty take her own time, in order to see what the outcome would be.

"By rapid kicking and scraping he managed to disengage himself and went running down the street to where the other children were and as I rode on I heard her tell him to come back, and he yelled back, he would not.

"Now wife, as I rode along I thought of the 'Unconscious Influence' of that mother and what could she expect of her son in later years."

"David, there are exceptions to all things and I am certainly glad indeed that our children have stayed with their early training, and may it be so well grafted into their minds that they will never forget or be disloyal to the seed sown in early childhood, for 'the way the twig is bent the tree is inclined.' "

"Well, wife, judging by what I saw this morning, I rather think this Johnston lad will be somewhat of a bent sapling."

"David, had I told you about the little conversation Mrs. Carter and I had the other day?"

"No, I think not."

"Well, we were speaking about Emily and her approaching marriage and I remarked, that Edith would miss her very much as they were such devoted friends.

"Mrs. Carter replied by saying, 'that she was indeed glad to know that Edith and Emily had cultivated such warm and lasting friendship.'

"She furthermore stated, 'it was the sweet unconscious influence of Edith that had wrought such a marked change in their home and it was she who had rescued Hugh and had helped to make of him the refined and noble man he now is.' "

After blowing his nose vehemently and clearing his throat so as to speak, he said, " 'In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand, for thou knowest not whether shall prosper this or that or whether they both shall be alike.' "

Shortly after Mr. and Mrs. Melton had had this conversation about their daughter, and the other young people heretofore mentioned, they were convinced that the two boys who had stolen Mr. Carter's car had been located, for the daily paper contained an account of their arrest.

They had been arrested for operating a confidence game and on further investigation concerning the character of the young men, it was learned, they were wanted at Yorkville, Ohio, on a charge of having stolen Mr. Carter's car.

The paper furthermore stated they would be brought back for trial.

The insurance company had never given up the search for them and they were inexpressibly grateful to those, who had proven themselves so competent, in accomplishing the task they had set out to do.

Judging by the opinion of the public in general they would not get any sympathy, and without a doubt be sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

It created no little excitement, when the train (bringing the young men home) pulled up at the station in Yorkville.

Many in number were the curious crowd of spectators who watched them lodged in the county jail.

Shouts and jeers from the crowd could be heard such as, "How did you enjoy your ride in the Cadillac?" "Guess you are going where you won't take so many joy rides," and many others similar to these until the two boys were out of hearing.

Tom Moore held his head high in the air, with that defiant, and dare-devil look he possessed, but Ray Allen had a downcast look and could look no one squarely in the face.

When the day was set for their hearing, they were found guilty, and bound over to await the action of the grand jury and as they could not furnish bond they were returned to jail. This would necessitate a long stay within the dingy, gloomy old prison walls, as it would be some little time before the circuit court would convene.

Mr. Melton had gone in town to hear the trial, so that evening he was going to try and comply with Rev. Allen's request to write him the results, as he himself could not attend.

It was with an unsteady hand and moist eyes, with an occasional drop of moisture on his paper that he finished and sealed the letter to Ray's father.

He could not in a measure but feel sorry for the boy, who had the best of training and who might have developed into manhood with a character and purpose in life so essential to those who have lofty ideals, and strong personality.

Many times during their stay in jail did Mr. Melton find it convenient to call on them and always taking with him some periodicals, such as he deemed best for them to read. These calls had become a source of joy to the boys, and they were ever looking forward to other calls as he always took with him words of cheer and always made applicable this passage, "We that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak."

Mr. Melton used this passage as applying to spiritual weakness.

Neither of the boys had any relatives in Yorkville, as the Moore family had moved some months ago.

It was on his return home after having made one of his morning calls that Mrs. Melton had in store for him a most delightful surprise, and one he had long been anxiously awaiting.

"Here is a letter from Edith," said his wife, as she handed him the envelope that contained the surprise.

He scarcely could believe his own eyes, and had to re-read it to make sure he had not been mistaken.

She had stated in her letter, that by special request, she had consented to sing at one of the large churches in Chicago the following Sunday.

By means of the radio system her voice would be sent broadcast over the country and at this time, Dr. Ellis would deliver a forceful sermon.

The Melton home had been equipped with one of the largest receiving radio instruments in the surrounding country, so it made it quite possible (by using an extra attachment) for all in the room to hear at the same time. Guy was very enthusiastic over the matter and spent the greater part of his time the remainder of the week putting his instrument in perfect working order, in order to obtain the best results possible.

Sunday evening found the Melton home filled with many guests, who by special request had come to hear Edith sing.

The evening was an ideal one for radio fans and this assembly of friends and neighbors could hear very distinctly and clear every word sent out from the church in Chicago.

Edith rendered most beautifully that old familiar hymn, "The Old Rugged Cross" and when she had finished, and her voice had died away, in the room on looking around, there was not a dry eye to be seen.

No one of the company had enjoyed the evening more fully, than Mr. Carter and to him it was a source of joy to hear the voice of the one who by her unconscious influence had turned the tide of his whole life, and not only his, but his entire family.

After all, it seemed to him that life was much sweeter, home more peaceful and pleasant, and troubles less numerous than ever before. There had been a missing link in the home since Hugh had gone away to college, for no member of the family could have been more deeply missed than he, with his bright beaming countenance and his sunny smiles for all. It was no unusual occurrence these days for Mr. Carter to find time for rest and to enjoy many pleasant evenings with his wife and family and ever ready to comply with their wishes and to serve them in the capacity of a devoted husband and loving father.

Emily's home ties were soon to be severed and it was with deep sighs that Mrs. Carter let her mind dwell on the coming event. Not that she was displeased in anyway whatever by Emily's choice, for such was not the case, but nevertheless, the willing hands, always ready to do some little thing that needed to be done just at a certain time, would greatly be missed by all the family.

Neither Edith nor Hugh came home for the Easter vacation, for at this season of the year it doesn't take long for a few spring months to roll by and then they could come to stay.

Already nature had burst the fruit tree buds into full bloom, and now we can inhale the fragrance of the apple, peach and plum blossoms and hear the loud twitter of birds as they fly from branch to branch, and the buzzing of bees,

as they gather the honey and go laden with it to deposit in their hives.

So after the petals begin to fall like snow on the ground and the young fruit can be seen on the trees, it isn't long until the June rose buds begin to swell and in due time burst forth sending with them their perfume that ladens the air near them so: when this time of the season arrives it will find the Carter home with its inmates in perfect readiness for a nuptial event.

To Edith this season of the year imparted a certain degree of sadness, for heretofore she had been at liberty to take long strolls and to gather the wild flowers that grew in great abundance near her home, so this denial meant much to her.

However, in dwelling on this thought she consoled herself by saying it would not be long until her old familiar walks and her gentle horse would be privileged to enjoy her existing presence again.

In a recent letter from Emily, she had imparted all the minute details concerning her wedding, stating she expected her to contribute her voice at this time. She had also advised her of the fact that Hugh and Margaret Page were to be their attendants and that Margaret would be a house guest some little while previous to the wedding. After reading Emily's letter she was very tired and restless, but decided it was brought on by the extra amount of time she was devoting to her music.

More than once Mrs. Jackson had advised her of the fact that she was overdoing herself, and if she did not stop and consider she would meet with a nervous breakdown.

"It is perfectly natural," said Edith, "for all normal human beings to have sad and lonely feelings at times, so I am

no exception to the rule. Nevertheless I don't believe in encouraging these feelings, therefore to a certain degree, I will try and dismiss them from my mind.''

It was only a few days after this that she found on her return home in the evening a letter waiting for her with its old familiar handwriting and Harvard post-mark.

It was freighted as usual with love and tender yearnings for her associations, and he was now counting the weeks and almost the days when they both would bid adieu to their respective schools and be at home again.

She felt much better after she had read Hugh's letter and was really vexed at herself for having entertained such unpleasant feeling as she had, after lingering on the contents of Emily's.

After reading Emily's letter again a few days later, she really had to confess there was not one word or statement in the whole letter to cause her uneasiness, yet to be real frank with herself, she must confess she had felt just a trifle twinge of jealousy course through her veins.

It was perfectly natural for Margaret Page to be one of the honored guests at the Carter home and to assist Emily in any way she could previous to the wedding, for it was to be one of the most prominent weddings that Yorkville had ever witnessed, so that now after due consideration Edith looked upon the event like a wise and sensible girl should have done.

If so inclined it becomes very easy to borrow trouble, especially if one feels a little out of sorts, — much more so than to dispel it.

Altogether, Edith possessed an unusual amount of self-will power so no matter what confronted her she was always

equal to the occasion, and she took much solace in the old saying, "Never trouble trouble till trouble troubles you."

She spent much time of late musing on the many happy days of her engagement and derived much pleasure in wearing the costly betrothal ring.

She had made many friends, and had received much attention and praiseworthy comments in regard to her voice all which afforded her a certain degree of satisfaction but, more especially had she enjoyed the companionship of Mr. and Mrs. Jackson and the comforts of their beautiful home, which had been a source of inexpressible gratitude to her during her stay in the Windy City.

As the weeks wore away and the days were so few in number prior to her departure she spent most of her spare time in collecting her small belongings (such as would be of no further service) and tucked them away in her trunk.

Like most girls she liked to read over her old letters and on looking them over she found the one her mother had written her only recently saying, that the boys would soon know their fate as the Circuit Court would convene the first of June.

She had been so busy lately engaged in her own personal interests, that she had not taken time to consider or give any thought to the trial.

This was Saturday evening and Court would convene Monday morning, so it would not be long until they were to know their future destiny.

"Can it be possible," thought she, "and I am to go home next Friday." It all seemed like a dream to her and she sat lost in thought almost motionless for some time, living over again the awful excitement and fear of that night when they stole the Cadillac.

The air was soft and balmy, the grass was still wet with the morning dew, and the birds perched just outside the windows were pouring forth their morning lay, when two boys entered the court room for trial.

The room was filled to its utmost capacity, and had you been sitting so as to get a full view of the prisoners, their faces would have afforded you an interesting subject for study.

The windows had been thrown wide open to admit the fresh morning air, and as its refreshing draughts could be felt it was noticeable to see it play with an occasional lock of hair that was made to fall across their foreheads.

They presented a sad and forsaken look, for no few times had Ray scanned the court room with wistful eyes, to get a glimpse of his father, but all without avail.

The last communication Ray had received from his father stated, he did not think it advisable for him to be present at the trial as it would do neither of them any material good.

Too, he had never consulted him in regard to getting into trouble, therefore knew he did not need his advice as to how to get out of it.

The defendants were tried and found guilty and when the verdict of the jury was read it cast a spell of solemnity over the court room, and for a short pause nothing could be heard, save the rustling and fluttering of the court documents the breezes were playing with, and when they receded left them lying in a disorderly manner.

After all, the residents of the town and surrounding country were very well pleased with the sentence that had been given them and thought perhaps it might serve as a lesson to others, who might contemplate actions of similar nature.

Mr. Melton was one of the last to leave the court room, and before he left he bade the boys good-bye and clasping their hands in his fatherly way, he impressed upon their minds very emphatically to try and be real men no matter what the cost might be, for after all, said he, "it will pay."

When Mr. Melton arrived home at noon his wife informed him that she had seen so little of him of late that she was beginning to think he would soon have his name associated with the Court House staff.

"Oh no, wife, not so bad as all that; I just wanted to hear that trial through and did not propose missing one word of it without some providential hindrance."

"Had you heard their sentence before I came home?"

"Yes, Mrs. Wilson had called me and told me.

"Do you think they entertained any feelings of regret for their past actions?"

"Yes, I am justified in saying they did, for when I bid them good-bye, they could scarcely restrain the tears that seemed so determined to flow."

"Are you the only one who told them good-bye?"

"No, there were several others and among them I noticed Mr. Carter, and I overheard him say to Ray, 'Follow the teachings of your dear old father for I have found them to be paths of pleasantness and ways of peace.' "

This remark touched Mrs. Melton so much that she sobbed aloud, not that she was so overcome in regard to Ray but for his father, who had done such noble work and had been the instrument in convincing others that they could live the life worth while.

"Well," said Mr. Melton, "I am real glad it is all over, and it may help to make of these two boys something of the better element in years to come."

"Now, David, you know Edith will be home Saturday, and as there are so many little odds and ends to be done before she comes, I will have to press you into my service in order that I may accomplish all I wish to do."

"All right, mother, I am at your service; so what does your ladyship wish me to do first?"

"Let me see, — I believe the first thing you may do for me after you have eaten your dinner, will be to take the car and run in town for Mrs. Jones as she has consented to come and help me the remainder of the week. I want to make some changes in Edith's room and too, I almost forgot to tell you that there is some freight at the depot."

"What is the freight, mother?"

"It is a bedroom suite for Edith's room and I want to have it all in perfect order for her when she arrives as it will be such a pleasant surprise for her. She has expressed a desire so often for an ivory enameled suite, so I have purchased an elegant one of the Renaissance period."

When Edith's room had been given its last finishing touch, and the shades had been lowered a trifle to expel the hot rays of sun, it presented a very attractive appearance.

The Melton home had undergone several minor changes but by hard work and long hours Mrs. Melton had been able to master all the tasks, so when the day dawned for Edith's arrival, the old home looked very charming and inviting, with its cut flowers conspicuous in all the rooms and especially had a bouquet of tea roses been carefully arranged on Edith's

dressing table and their fragrance had perfumed the whole room.

A few potted plants occupied their respective places in the windows of the breakfast room that overlooked the flower garden. More time and labor had been spent on the flower garden this summer than in previous years, for all knew how fond Edith was of this favorite spot, and how dearly she loved flowers and in fact everything akin to nature. This garden occupied a space on the east side of the house, and by the thoughtful planning it was afforded with ample shade to any who might wish to stroll down its various paths, and inhale the perfume of its treasures.

Just before partaking of the evening meal, Mr. Melton walked out to the garden and took a general survey of everything to see if it was in perfect keeping for his daughter's inspection the following day. With arms folded across his breast, he leisurely walked through all its various pathways, and then standing for a moment gazing on the beautiful coloring and symmetrical formation of each flower he said, "No artist has the touch of brush or tint of coloring to imitate the workmanship of God."

It was indeed a happy reunion that evening at Quiet Dale Farm, and no one thought of sleep until a late hour.

Edith, as she ran from room to room inspecting her old home, vowed "The dearest place on earth to me is 'Home Sweet Home.' " It was some little time before she really recovered from the shock of the surprise, that her mother had waiting for her in the new furnishings of her room.

After she had visited every nook and corner of the home, her next place to visit was the barn, as she declared she could

never close her eyes in sleep until she had had a visit with Black Beauty.

Guy had been putting in some extra work on Black Beauty, and her back shone just like a piece of black satin. While Edith was talking to her she stood with her head tilted just a trifle toward her just as much as to say she understood all her young mistress was telling her.

They found so many interesting things to talk about and the time passed so rapidly that before they were aware the hands on the clock pointed to the hour of midnight.

"Don't you think it is time to retire?" said Mr. Melton; "we could sit here and talk until daylight and yet, our visit with our daughter would have scarcely begun. My eyelids are drooping and feel as though they needed a prop to support them, so I will have to ask to be excused for the remainder of the night," said Mr. Melton, and his footsteps had scarcely died away on the stairs, until they heard the loud deep snoring, coming from his room.

Edith and her mother soon followed his example and laid their heads down on pillows of ease and comfort to dream of family reunions and the joy they bring with them.

It was generally known that Edith had returned home, and many of the church members who had been neglecting their church work and not so much as even occupying space in the pews were to be seen in the congregation the first Sunday after her return.

It certainly proved quite a shock to the minister, for he became so confused on entering the pulpit that he almost forgot to read his text.

However, in a short time he recovered from the effects of the shock and after Edith's selection he became convinced why he had been permitted to look such an audience in the face.

During his morning discourse he remarked that it was much easier and much more gratifying to talk to an audience like this than to stand and preach to a pile of lumber, void of feeling and expression, as he had done on previous occasions.

Edith had reached the rung in the ladder where the famous stand and pause, yet in no way did she seem conscious of the fact for neither fame nor city had had any marked degree of change upon her. If anything she had grown more beautiful and her girlish ways were giving place to womanly grace.

There were so many, many friends to greet her after church that she did not get a chance to talk long to Emily and Robert.

Margaret Page was with the Carter family and Edith had only time to acknowledge the old acquaintance and pass on.

She heard someone calling her name and on looking around saw Emily running toward their car.

"Will it be agreeable for us to call this afternoon?" said Emily.

"Most assuredly," said Edith.

"Edith, you know Hugh hasn't come home yet so he can't form one of our party, but we are expecting him this evening on the late train."

"I knew he was coming home today but he was not real sure what train he would arrive on," said Edith.

In the afternoon Robert, Emily, and Margaret started to Quiet Dale Farm to spend a pleasant visit with Edith, but little dreaming of this visit ending very abruptly.

While these young people were enjoying this occasion to the full extent, Hugh was aboard a fast train, homeward bound.

He has tried every conceivable means to try and persuade the conductor to stop at Yorkville for him, but all efforts proved fruitless. At last he wired his father to this effect:

Meet me at Dayton at four o'clock P. M.
HUGH.

This station is a regular stop for the fast train and about forty miles distant from Yorkville.

Mr. Carter immediately held a hurried conversation by phone with Robert and learned that he and the girls would go to meet him.

Robert informed the girls they would have to make haste and lose no time for it was now 3:15 P. M. and Hugh would necessarily have to wait at any rate.

Edith was tired and worn from the effects of her journey of the day before but willingly consented to accompany them on this trip, for all day she had been anxiously awaiting the message stating his return.

Hugh's power of endurance was of the lasting quality, until it came to the test of waiting for a delayed train or someone to meet him at a railroad station.

The train pulled into the station on schedule time and Hugh and his personal belongings were deposited on the platform. He looked all around, in vain hopes of seeing some familiar face, but saw none. He next went to the waiting room and after scanning its occupants very carefully decided it was not time for them to arrive.

He had purchased a paper, so sat down and tried to read, but in utter disgust he flung it down and walked out of the depot. "What a fool," said he, "trying to read and content myself when it is utterly impossible."

He paced up and down the walk in front of the depot, watching every approaching automobile until his feet fairly ached, thinking surely the next coming in sight would be the expected car.

With hat in one hand, and handkerchief in the other, he frequently wiped the perspiration from his brow, as he paced the walk. His discontented frame of mind was attracting the attention of the travelers who were waiting for their trains, and he overheard a couple of old gentlemen talking as he passed where they were seated saying, "The young man seems very uneasy for some cause, and judging by the expression on his face he is either a belated bridegroom, or is expecting to attend a funeral."

Now while he was spending anxious time waiting, the car with its occupants was over at another depot waiting for him, thinking the train that was to arrive at 4:00 P. M. was running behind time as Robert could not locate him in or near the station.

Finally he decided to inquire of the agent about the train, and to his astonishment learned that the train he had reference to had arrived on schedule time but at the other depot.

However, he was not long in locating the depot, where they found Hugh almost desperate and decidedly fatigued by his long and strenuous wait.

He no sooner spied Edith in the car, than all his troubles seemed like bubbles and soon disappeared.

If all the residents of Yorkville had been lined up at this depot to witness this meeting he would have embraced Edith and Emily in just the same manner he did.

Margaret stood a trifle back, watching the greeting, and vowed to herself she had never seen a young man as handsome as Hugh.

Too, she felt as though he had slighted her as he only recognized their acquaintance by the formal clasping of hands. More than once on the return trip did Margaret wish she had remained at home, for the two couples were so deeply interested in themselves that there was very little thought or attention given to her.

Her feelings were not of the most pleasing character toward Edith and if an opportunity would present itself she would cause her some uneasiness.

CHAPTER XIII

Emily Weds

A WEDDING possesses a certain degree of singular magnetism; it attracts both young and old; it involves the very essence of true happiness and love or, remorse with bitter tears of disappointment. It is the severing of family ties, the union of two lives who erect a new altar called home. Such is the common fate of man.

True happiness and love shall reign supreme around the shrine erected by the union of these two young lives.

The new bungalow in Cleveland with its costly furniture and artistic paintings, which Emily has recently selected, is now awaiting the arrival of the bride.

The week following Hugh's return, was filled with many pretty dinner parties and pre-nuptial social functions. The most elaborate dinner party had been given by Edith, and never on any occasion had the Melton home looked so charming and inviting as on this particular day.

The Page family with some of Robert's closest friends, would arrive from Cleveland Saturday morning.

None of the residents of the town could recall a time when Yorkville had had so many stylish guests within its gates.

Saturday was an ideal day for a wedding, as it was a wonderful June day, for the weather was fine and everything worked out lovely. The church was brilliantly lighted and beautifully decorated for this occasion. The wedding was very

beautiful and impressive in every detail, and especially did Edith's recital receive much meritorious comment.

A reception at the Carter home immediately followed the ceremony, including the immediate relatives and friends, after which Robert and his bride departed to northern points on their honeymoon. After their return they will be at home to their friends in Cleveland.

Margaret was loath to return home after the wedding as she was trying all her pretty wiles and winsome ways on Hugh, in order to accomplish her aim. The evening of the reception, she tried numberless times to occupy his whole attention, and every time she found him and Edith engaged in conversation, she invariably encroached upon their presence.

All this was very noticeable to Edith, but who at the same time, showed no outward signs of displeasure. The beautiful, white sparkling diamond would have sufficed for most sensible young ladies, but such was not the case with Margaret Page.

Often during the last week she had called to mind the following: "All is fair in love and war," and "There is many a slip between the cup and the lip."

These thoughts afforded her a generous supply of ease and self-confidence.

She found no charity in her heart for Edith, therefore never once did she comment on the unusual talent that she possessed, for jealousy was gnawing at her very heartstrings.

Edith's beauty and talent together with her sweet disposition was a rival she did not know just how to combat. However, she carried home with her a promise from Hugh to visit Cleveland before he returned to college.

Some few days after the wedding Edith received a long letter from Mr. and Mrs. Robert E. Page saying, they were

now over in Canada and while they were at Niagara they met some of her old friends, the Walkers from Illinois.

While Edith was poring over the contents of Emily's letter her mother suddenly interrupted by saying: "I must answer Mrs. Walker's letter just as soon as I think they have returned home."

Edith slowly folded the letter, replaced it in the envelope, then sat for a long time lost in her own deep mental self.

"What is my little daughter thinking so seriously about?" said Mrs. Melton. "Are you thinking of accepting that offer with that Chautauqua at Old Salem, Illinois?"

"No; that wasn't what I had in mind at present, but really, I think I shall accept their offer at an early date, for I think it is worthy consideration."

"Edith, do you realize that you do not have to earn your own livelihood?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure, yet at the same time I am in a position to defray some of my own personal expenses and you know girls derive a great deal of satisfaction in the thought that they are capable of earning their own money and in a way, be independent.

"Not that you and father have denied me anything, for such is not the case; but you know, mother, how you felt about these matters when you were young and earned your own support."

"Oh! yes, I understand," said her mother; "but what does Hugh think about your going?"

"To be real frank, I have never said one word to him about it."

"Aren't you going to tell him?"

"I think it rather doubtful."

"Well, Edith, you are acting so strangely of late that I scarcely know what to think about it. Too, your father and I haven't given our permission yet for you to go, although, I see no good reason why you can't accept this offer."

Here the subject dropped and Guy came and interrupted by asking Edith to take a ride.

It was while the children were enjoying their ride that the father and the mother engaged in a real heart-to-heart talk involving the noticeable change in Edith since the wedding.

"Edith and Emily have been inseparable friends," said Mrs. Melton, "and no matter what the outcome of Edith and Hugh may bring forth, I still maintain that Emily will remain loyal to her, for she is the type of womanhood not easily influenced by petty offenders."

Her husband replied by saying, "I think it permissible to say that Margaret is going to do all in her power to add a second Carter to the Page family."

"Yes, but he doesn't seem infatuated with her in the least. Only she is forever thrusting herself upon his presence and you know, David, Edith is perfectly conscious of it all."

"True enough, but has she made mention of anything concerning the matter to you?"

"Actions speak louder than words, David, and too since we've been talking, I think to recall Margaret's visit during the holidays. Do you remember the afternoon that Hugh, Emily, Robert and she drove out here for Edith?"

"Yes, I think I recall the time."

"Well, there was something happened that afternoon to cause Edith to shed many bitter tears, and when I questioned her about it she said: 'Please, mother, don't mention it to me any more for perhaps I was partly to blame.' "

"Oh! well, mother, he is going back to Harvard this fall and Edith to Chicago, so perhaps by that time if she is thoroughly convinced he is learning to care for Margaret she may find some avenue of escape," mused the worried father. "You know, mother, if a woman is so minded, she can cause no little trouble in a case like this, for she realizes Emily is one of the family now, and too, Hugh would have to be courteous no matter what the result would bring forth, and yet, at the same time, be nothing more than a friend."

"This is all true and I make due allowance for all you have stated: yet it seems to me he could in some way show his displeasure of her unsolicited intrusion upon his good feelings, and at the same time retain his true gentlemanly manner.

"I tell you, David, this is becoming of vital importance and Edith will not always forbear everything, and I of course could not ask her to do so. She has remained so loyal to him and in turn he equally should do likewise, for you know what a dissipated wretch he was when he first tried to win her to his cause. Gambling dens, dance halls, soft drink parlors, where I am told that you can obtain any strong drink you desire, were his frequent haunts. So now since he has so wonderfully redeemed himself, I still want to see him retain his manly re-bearing with her.

"Think of the many opportunities she had while in Chicago, and perhaps some of them just as worthy as Hugh and no doubt just as eager to gain her acquaintance as he was."

"Well! Mother, coming events cast their shadows before them. And in some ways they are akin to my rheumatism as I can always feel my old joints begin to ache before an approaching storm or change in the weather; so I guess I will have to confess: I too, see a marked change in Edith so we will just

have to drift along with the tide of time in order to see how it will all end. Nevertheless, I can't say I see much change in Hugh, although, since I come to think about it, I don't believe he calls as frequently as he did before Emily was married, do you?''

''I know he doesn't, but where or on whom to place the blame I do not know. If Edith's change is so perceptible to you and I it's equally so to him, so perhaps in a way she is to blame.'' Thus their conversation ran, until on looking up they saw Edith standing in the doorway.

''Oh! mother, we are just as hungry as two wolves; is dinner ready?''

''Pray tell me what time it is,'' said Mrs. Melton.

''Eleven forty-five,'' said Mr. Melton.

''If the children had not returned, we would have sat here and talked all the afternoon without one morsel of food,'' replied Mrs. Melton.

''Father, you and mother surely have had an interesting subject for your conversation, so pray tell me what it was.''

''No, never mind, my little daughter: mother and I still have a few little secrets although we have been married many years.''

To this Edith gave a hearty laugh and said she would not urge him to divulge his secret.

It was some time after this that Mrs. Melton received a letter from Mrs. Walker saying: ''They would as usual occupy their cottage at the Old Salem Chautauqua and as she saw Edith's name appear on the program she insisted that she be their guest during the assembly, stating she could not accept any excuse she might offer.''

It was through Edith's instructor in Chicago she had secured this prominent place on the program. The family discussing her trip to Illinois said: "All their anxiety and worry was at end as she could now accept the hospitality the Walkers had offered and thereby spend a most enjoyable time."

It had been a source of worry to her parents ever since Edith signed up for the engagement, not knowing just what would be best for her to do, whether she should remain on the grounds or secure lodging in the city.

She at once answered Mrs. Walker's letter accepting the invitation and expressing her deep appreciation of her kindness.

While she was in the mood of letter writing she also wrote Emily a long letter imparting this knowledge to her, but added: "Please don't tell Hugh as I wish to surprise him."

As time wore on she did not divulge the secret and not until he read one of the programs did he comprehend this intelligence. He was none too well pleased in regard to the matter as he could plainly see her indifferent attitude toward him.

She had always been so lovable and confiding, but now he could see the clouds rising in the horizon of their once happy life. Just recently, on one of his visits, they had disputed over several petty differences, which, in a reality were not worth mentioning.

The one thought uppermost in his mind was: that she had done him an injustice by not imparting to him the intelligence of her engagement with the Chautauqua. However, he found it very difficult to convince her she had done wrong, for she was equally grieved to think he would correspond with Margaret Page without her knowledge.

This she did not make known to him, although she had in her possession one of Margaret's letters he had dropped in the hall some few weeks ago. He had left his coat in the hall and in removing it from its resting place in some way this tell-tale letter fell from his pocket.

Not knowing what the missive was, or what it contained she picked it up and took it to her room.

At a glance she recognized the Cleveland postmark, but it was an evident fact it was not Emily's handwriting.

It was thoroughly human for her to read its contents. With trembling hands and tear-dimmed eyes she removed it from its envelope. She learned from its pages he would visit Cleveland in the near future and that Margaret's father had purchased a new Packard car she was learning to drive so that when he came she could drive him around the city.

She wept and sobbed until she found herself almost growing hysterical, as her future happiness was about to be dashed into utter ruin and grief. To mistrust and doubt him meant a broken heart and shattered hopes.

Losing consciousness, she lay for some time pale and motionless upon the floor. Not until the gray dawn of morning did she realize what had happened. Peering into the mirror, she beheld herself, worn and haggard, from the night's deep sorrow.

How or what to do she did not know as she wished to hide her grief from her family. She erased as best she could from her cheeks the traces of tell-tale tears of the night, then sat for some time awaiting the hour for morning rising.

All unmindful of what had happened, Hugh was lost in a deep profound sleep. This short period of time had afforded her ample opportunity to consider the best course for her to

pursue: in looking backward she could now see why it was that Margaret on all previous visits to Yorkville had made herself so wonderfully agreeable and pleasant in his company.

Never until now had she so much ground for jealousy, for she really thought none could ever come between them. Emily was so happy living in the constant and enduring love of her husband and why could she have not been permitted to enjoy the same sweet happiness? This she could not fathom.

As she turns the leaves of bygone days in fancy, she sees so many little incidents that point out clearly the culmination of this letter.

Ere long she heard voices and in a short time footsteps on the stairs that announced the time of morning rising.

She and Emily frequently heard from each other, but never once did either mention the name of Margaret.

All necessary arrangements had been made, and everything possible had been done to insure her a pleasant time while at the Chautauqua. Her father, in speaking of the trip said: "Edith, it will be so beneficial to you and will be an ideal place for rest which you so much need before resuming your school work."

"Oh! yes father, but I really do not want to go at all, and I so much regret that I made an engagement to sing at this time."

"Well, I assure you, I am not sorry you have obligated yourself, for those people over in Illinois don't know what a wonderful voice my little daughter possesses; and who knows, but what it may mean many similar engagements for you. So, taking everything into consideration, I think it is a fine trip for you and I am sure no one needs the change more than you."

It was while they were discussing the many benefits that might be derived from this outing that Hugh first discovered he had misplaced or carelessly lost this letter of Margaret's he had received some time ago.

He had gone to his room to write Emily a short note, telling her when to expect him, and in hurriedly glancing through his old letters, he discovered Margaret's letter was missing. He searched every pocket of his clothing and all his old letters one by one were gone over, but not a vestige of this particular one did he find.

"What a stupid fool I am," said he, "to carry that around in my pocket, and no doubt I have lost it out at Edith's and if such be the case, there is no end to the trouble it may cause." There was nothing he possessed he would not freely give if he only knew where, or in whose possession it was.

To ask Edith if she had found it would only make matters worse; for if she hadn't found it, it would only arouse her curiosity and lead her to think that he was guilty of some underhand misdemeanors.

The only reasonable conclusion he could reach was: to let it drop for the time being and some day he might find it where he least expected. Neverthless, he wrote Emily briefly stating he would visit her the following week.

His days were growing few in number at home, as it would soon be time for him to resume his college education. He had had so many pressing invitations from Emily and had been putting her off from time to time that she really was becoming quite vexed with him.

She was so anxious for him to see her beautiful new home, as all her letters had come laden with the supreme

happiness she was enjoying and in a measure, this made him a trifle envious.

He and Emily were separated now and no few times had he missed her warm sisterly and ever-ready counsel in time of need. It was in this letter that he had written her that he had told her about Edith's trip to Illinois, saying: he was very much displeased because she had not taken him into her confidence.

Having finished his letter he leisurely strolled down the street in the direction of the post office after depositing it there where it would soon be on its way to gladden Emily's heart. He then crossed the street to the park and there sat down for a rest and meditation.

He was unhappy and why? Could he answer his question, or was it an admissible argument that his discouraged state of mind had been brought about by Emily's sister-in-law.

His visits with Edith were becoming a source of annoyance rather than a source of pleasure, as it seemed to him as if nothing he could do or say met with her approval. Just beneath an old elm tree, that had sheltered both young and old from the sun's hot rays on many summer days, was where he sat for some time, deeply engrossed in serious thoughts as he watched the squirrels in the park as they ran to and fro in their playful glee, they, without a care or disappointment, and he, wondering all the while, why it was, that mortal man was made to suffer remorse and tears. Nevertheless, this all remained a mystery to him.

He was longing to pour the contents of his heart into Emily's sympathizing ear, and ere long this wish would be granted.

As he stood in the hall Monday morning with traveling bag in hand he called to his mother saying: "Well I'm off for Emily's."

"Why, Hugh, why had you not told me you were going?"

"Because I just decided a few minutes ago to catch this early train. I had not expected to go until tomorrow afternoon, but now — it makes no great difference when I go or when I return."

"What in the world has come over you to make you talk this way. Has anything unexpected happened?"

"Yes, it is happening every day and will continue as long as we both live."

"Can't you wait until tomorrow?"

"No, not after I have made up my mind to go; so, as it is almost train time I will have to hurry on."

She followed him down the steps that led to the walk, and at the same time giving him many messages to be delivered to Emily, and as he walked on at a rather rapid gait he heard her say: "Be sure and write me soon, and let me know when I may expect your return." This last request had no response, although she felt quite sure he had heard what she said, even if he were half way down the walk.

It was a great surprise to Emily when she answered the summons of the doorbell, and beheld her big, broad-shouldered and manly brother standing just outside the screen door.

"Oh! Hugh, what a shock you have given me as you stated in your letter you would be here Tuesday afternoon."

"Yes, but you see I changed my mind."

It was with the pride that no one save a bride could possess that she conducted him from one room to another displaying her new home. He said very little until she begged

him enter Robert's den; "This," said he "is my ideal, as it is a facsimile of the one I have so often pictured in my mind would occupy its place in my home."

"Hugh, why don't you say 'Edith's home and mine?' "

His face heightened in color and biting his lips severely he said nothing.

She noticed the troubled expression that flitted across his face, so in an instant, she began digressing by asking numberless questions involving each individual of her family and all about her home, and finished by asking, "Why did Edith not come with you?"

He had answered all her questions to the best of his knowledge until it came to the last one, which to him was a stunner and which to this day remains unanswered.

CHAPTER XIV

Edith's Visit to Illinois

THE ENSUING week found Edith and her personal belongings, such as would be needed on an occasion like this, ready for her first visit to Old Salem Chautauqua. She had just received a letter from Hugh the latter part of the week, saying, he had decided to absent himself from home for a longer period, therefore he would be unable to see her again before her visit to Illinois.

In a way, this intelligence was no surprise to her, for she knew full well he had deferred his return on account of Margaret Page. With inevitable thoughts; she said aloud, after learning its contents: "Nothing can repay the injury he has done"; so with these weighty thoughts bearing down upon her she reluctantly made ready for her departure.

The Carter family had also received a word from Hugh to the same effect, and as to what or why he had decided to remain longer they could not fathom unless — it was for the same reason that Edith entertained.

It was while Mr. and Mrs. Carter was seated on the front porch Monday evening enjoying all the beauty that a moonlight evening could afford, that they entered into a deep discussion involving Hugh and Edith.

"Did Edith leave for Illinois this afternoon?" asked Mr. Carter.

"Yes," replied Mrs. Carter.

"You know, mother, I don't fully comprehend the meaning of Hugh's actions of late, for it appears to me that he is just about to lose his head over Margaret Page, and I'm here to state the facts to you: it will meet with no sanction of mine, as one in the family is enough for me.

"Not that I am displeased with Emily's choice, for without a doubt, Robert is a fine fellow and is a 'Chip of the old block,' for he is of the same type of a character as his father." Continuing his remarks he said: "Margaret is just the reverse. Just as much like her mother as two peas, and goodness knows, it has required no little grace on the part of Mr. Page to live with her and put up with all he had to contend."

"Well, Joe, all I have to say is this: If Hugh has no better judgment than to allow her to come between him and Edith, let him suffer the consequence. I'm quite sure Edith is broken-hearted over the matter and Hugh ought to be ashamed of himself," added the anxious mother.

While they were seated here on the porch, protected from the view of the passers-by by the honeysuckle that climbed in great profusion on the trellis of the porch, Edith was on board a train speeding away toward her destination.

It was a warm sultry August evening and the lightning was becoming more vivid in the far-off clouds with an occasional roll of distant thunder that heralded the approach of a coming storm: it was then they vacated the porch to retire.

Mr. and Mrs. Walker were eagerly awaiting the time of Edith's arrival and many in number were their friends whom they had told of her coming.

Edith's first and lasting impression of the Chautauqua grounds and its surroundings was one of exquisite delight for it was a wonderfully laid out park with the Sangamon river

winding in beautiful, graceful curves around its western border.

This was called a natural Chautauqua park as nature had lent itself in furthering the beauty of the grounds which far outdid any workmanship of man.

Edith was very fond of nature, and decided at once it was an ideal place for rest and very fitting for one who, like herself, wishes to be alone and stroll its various pathways, so here she found; "Shadowed roadways, gleaming water, slumbering hills, that called forth the primitive in all of us."

On some of her previous morning walks she had attracted the eyes of the curious on account of her unusual beauty, and many inquiries had been made as to who the charming young lady might be.

A young man who was one of the occupants of a cottage near the Walkers, chanced to hold a conversation with Mr. Walker, and in speaking of Miss Melton said: "If she is a fair type of the product of the Buckeye state I think I will visit it in the near future, for she far outstrips the feminine sex of Illinois."

She had written Hugh a brief note just before she departed saying, doubtless she would be away when he returned and as he had not asked for her address she took it for granted that it was no material interest to him, therefore she made no mention concerning it.

The Chautauqua life was helping in a way to make amends for the sorrow of the weeks before, and now she was ready to do her best in the afternoon by pouring forth her voice in a volume of sweet song.

She was to make her first appearance on the program Wednesday afternoon at which time Mr. William Jennings Bryan would deliver one of his forceful lectures.

The crowd had been pouring into the grounds all day and at noon it was a density of human beings, as Mr. Bryan always attracted large crowds on account of his unusual eloquence of speech and worthy thoughts for consideration.

It was a beautiful girlish figure that stepped to the platform to acknowledge her first introduction at Old Salem Chautauqua and needless to say she delighted both young and old and found it necessary to respond to an encore.

After the noise had subsided enough to ensure Mr. Bryan's voice being heard, he stepped to the platform amid great applause and said: "Ladies and Gentlemen, it affords me a great pleasure to be present here this afternoon not so much in what I'm going to say, but, in what has been my privilege to hear, for," said he, "the inspiration of this unusual voice prompts me to deliver to you this afternoon, the best I have in my shop.

"Now, before I begin my lecture, let me say to your platform manager: That I know of no better drawing card for your Chautauqua than to secure an engagement with Miss Melton at your earliest convenience to appear on your program next year." (Applause)

Mr. Bryan spoke for an hour and fifty-five minutes, and those who had been fortunate in securing a seat to deposit their avoirdupois felt no inclination of discomfort on account of his lengthy speech; and equally so had the immense crowd on the outside enjoyed every word of it, notwithstanding the fact they had stood first on one foot and then on the other in order to rest their weary limbs.

One certain individual, who had traveled a long distance in order to hear his lecture and Miss Melton sing, had been one of the number who had stood on the outside at some remote distance, for various reasons. However, he felt amply repaid for all the efforts he had made in trying to catch a fast train out of Indianapolis when the one he was aboard had arrived a few minutes behind schedule time; also in taking into consideration the young lady who had sung with so much power and sweetness had more than pleased his fondest dreams.

That evening as the Walkers and Edith were returning from the dining-hall they observed a messenger boy standing at their cottage, and on going up he inquired if Miss Melton was one of their party, at which she immediately answered in the affirmative.

He at once delivered to her a box containing a beautiful bouquet of American Beauty roses, without a vestige of a card, or any means of the identity of the sender. The Walkers were at as much a loss as Edith, to know from whom, or what source the mysterious roses came.

This favor disturbed her peace of mind and aroused her curiosity as she knew Hugh was in Cleveland, and, too, he would not have sent them under the circumstances existing between them.

She had spent so many sleepless nights of late, and had had so many, many, troubles that now they were beginning to tell on her, for her face was now wearing a somewhat pained expression, — so here was another worry for her.

She did not solicit or encourage favors of unknown origin especially from strangers, therefore she did wish that the sender of the roses had not acted so presumptuous for it met with no approval from her.

They were beautiful indeed, but she only gave them a toss in the direction of the library table, and at the same time said to Mrs. Walker: "They do not merit a receptacle."

"Oh yes, Edith, place them in a vase of water as the flowers aren't responsible for the situation."

She complied with Mrs. Walker's request and that evening after the lecture they looked beautiful on the table and shed an abundance of fragrance to recipient.

It was at this time that she told Mrs. Walker about an individual on the train that had tried to force his acquaintance with her as she was en route to the Chautauqua. "I sat for some time," said Edith, "without showing any outward notice of his intrusion until he insisted on sharing my seat with me, at which I at once asked him to please discontinue his interruptions, as he was annoying me.

"He finally left the sleeper for a smoke and after that made no further advances. Now do you suppose the roses came from this source?" inquired Edith.

"Oh, I am sure I am not in a position to say," said Mrs. Walker, "but it does seem strange that the sender would withhold his name without some good reason."

Before Edith retired she wrote her mother, stating all the facts she knew concerning the flowers, and finished by saying they annoyed her, and she was at a loss to know from what source they came. It was in this letter too, that she made known to her family her acceptance of an invitation to accompany the Walkers to their country home near Jacksonville, Illinois.

She appeared on the program several times during the remainder of the week, and each time she gained in favor with all.

At no time since her arrival had she so thoroughly enjoyed herself more than on a short trip up the river to Old Salem National Park, where she was privileged to tread the same historic grounds that the immortal Lincoln had trod in years gone by.

Then too, there was the old store he had once operated, as well as many other things to call to the mind of the visitor many incidents connected with his early life while a resident of this place.

Illinois was to her a wonderful state, with its historic places linked together with the names of Grant, Logan, Lincoln, and Douglas, with many others who had braved the hardships of the pioneer's life in order to help further the advancement of one of the greatest states of our republic: and who now, lie sleeping on its prairies awaiting the final reward of their works.

Edith, in speaking to Mrs. Walker about the scenery and the historic associations connected with Old Salem said: "I wish I was a poet with nothing else to do but write a story about Lincoln and these beautiful slumbering hills. But, as I am no poet I shall be satisfied with my voice and sing "Illinois" for the assembly if they request me to appear on the program tomorrow."

"Oh! Edith," replied Mrs. Walker, "that certainly is a capital idea and I will see that you are granted this privilege."

The last day of the Chautauqua had its ending, its residents, numbering that of a city in population, were making ready to abandon their quiet homes on the bank of the river and turn their faces homeward, which led in many directions. Many good-byes were being said, friends were parting for

another year, and perhaps forever, lovers were interceding for themselves, all on this last day at the Chautauqua.

Mrs. Walker had been busy all morning answering callers who came to say good-bye and expressing to Edith their pleasure of her acquaintance.

After making a general survey of the interior of the cottage, in order to make sure nothing had been overlooked, Mrs. Walker declared: "They were now ready for their trip home."

As they entered their car she inquired of Mr. Walker if he had left any instructions at the post office in regard to their mail, and he answered her by saying he had fully intended to attend to the matter that morning but it had slipped his mind as he had had so much to think about.

They then drove over to the city where Mr. Walker left instructions with the post master regarding their mail and that of Miss Melton's. When he re-entered the car he said: "A letter for Miss Melton," and at the same time delivering it to her. It was from her mother saying they were much surprised to learn she had decided to remain away longer and concluded her letter by saying: "Hugh had not returned yet, and that his mother had received only one letter from him since he left home."

Edith finished reading her letter and then rode as far as Springfield in almost utter silence, except when interrupted by an occasional remark from Mrs. Walker concerning the country in which they were passing through.

Mrs. Walker had observed the changed expression of her face since reading the letter and inquired if it had contained any sad news or if her mother was ill? To this Edith replied: "It contained neither, but thought her mother was somewhat

disappointed because she had decided to make a more lengthy visit.''

This foregoing statement was partly answerable for her silence, yet there was a more weighty one which she could not dismiss from her mind. Whether or not, these were transitory thoughts she could not say; however, time will tell, she mused, as the car sped on and soon brought them in sight of the dome of the state capitol.

They made no tour of the city, only stopping long enough to eat dinner, for they were tired and anxious to reach home. They explained to Edith they would at an early date bring her on a visit to this city, and conduct her to places of interest which were many in number, including the home of Lincoln and the large commanding monument at Oak Ridge which marks his last resting-place.

Edith completed the rest of the journey in semi-silence, and not until Mr. Walker headed his car in the gateway that led down a beautiful drive with a row of trees on either side did she show any signs of appreciation of their hospitality.

When the car stopped at a side entrance she beheld a large country home, well-kept lawn, bordered with a hedge of roses, and large flower beds with foliage and a profusion of blooming flowers.

Quiet Dale Farm was beautiful, but here she found one much more elaborate in its general make-up and its name was: ''The Home of the Chester White.''

Everything was painted pure white, which seemed a very appropriate color, especially to those engaged in the white hog business as the color of the home coincided with the type of hogs.

Teddy, the big dog, came out to meet them and began barking and wagging his tail as much as to say: "I am glad you have returned." He at once became a warm friend of Edith's and it was no unusual occurrence to see her and the dog out for a hike about the farm.

Up until her first night at the country home of the Walker's, she had had no word from Hugh, since the letter she received on Saturday before she started west, as she called it. That night seated in a pretty little bedroom rocker she tried numberless times to reach some reasonable conclusion that would in some way aid her in her deep trouble, for live she felt she could not much longer unless the heavy burden of her heart be lifted.

The guest chamber she was occupying was indeed a beauty of elegance. Its predominating color was a soft restful shade of shell pink with just a touch of pea green intermingled to enhance the coloring scheme of the room.

The wall decorations of this home were paintings made by the touch of the brush guided by the artistic hand of Mrs. Walker. The beauty of her room so attracted her that she sat for some time loath to turn off the lights.

She wrote several letters on this particular evening and one included a letter to Emily in which she tried the best she could to describe some of the most interesting places she had visited, but not once did she mention Hugh's name, nor make any inquiries as to his whereabouts.

The time sped away so fast and they were on the go so much that Mrs. Walker in speaking to Edith about the many places they had expected her to visit said: "She was entertaining grave doubts as to whether or not they would be able to cover so much territory, during her stay."

Jacksonville was a city of much interest to Edith, with its large state institutions and colleges which required much of her time in order to acquire some little knowledge concerning them.

Too, there was a large boating lake a short distance from this home, where Edith spent much of her time on the water as it was here she first learned to row a boat.

It was the last week of Edith's stay that they decided one morning, while still seated in the dainty, white breakfast-room, that they would take her to their summer cottage down on the Illinois river near the little town of Meridosia. This cottage was called Shady Inn and was equipped with modern conveniences, and this trip to the river would give them access to their large motor boat, Island Inn, No. 10.

"Oh!" said Edith, "this far exceeds my greatest expectations; and won't it be delightful to ride the waves on a river?"

She simply went in raptures over the cottage, after she had taken a restrospective view of its interior, and declared it to be an ideal place for lovers to spend their honeymoon.

"Yes, Edith," said Mrs. Walker, "and when you marry, we will turn the keys over to you and your husband for a fortnight"—

"Yes and too, the key to the boat," added Mr. Walker.

Her face heightened in color as she thanked them and said: "She might someday require of them to keep their promise."

To Edith this was real life, and never had she dreamed that this old world was filled with so much beauty until the evening when they rode up the river to a town about forty miles distant.

The moon was coming up when they entered the boat, and before they reached their destination the clouds began scurrying across its pathway; then in an instant it would shoot out from behind them throwing its reflection on the water which indeed presented a most wonderful picture.

The heavens were so filled with beauty of the divine creator's work that no artist need to try to imitate his workmanship, for he could only make a straggling blunder of his efforts.

On their return they beheld the density of the gathering clouds, with only a slight glimpse of the moon at intervals, and from all indications, suggested a rain before the dawn of the morning.

"Oh, well, if it just doesn't storm," said Mrs. Walker, as she and Edith waited for Mr. Walker to make the boat fast to the wharf.

Turning to Edith she continued by saying: "Does it make you nervous when there is a severe electrical storm?"

"No," answered Edith; "and I should judge this would be an ideal place to witness a storm, in order to derive all the beauty of the lightning as it plays on the waters."

"To be sure," said Mrs. Walker, "and that is what makes it so terrifying to me, as I imagine it is in a miniature way like a storm at sea."

It was some time during the small hours of the morning that Edith was awakened by someone pulling her out of bed and bidding her to dress as soon as possible, for Mrs. Walker was almost frantic with fear they would be blown away, bag and baggage.

To say it was a terrible storm was only putting it in mild terms, for it seemed evident they would be blown away, for

the rocking and quaking of the cottage in the path of the storm was ready at any moment to yield from its foundation.

The lightning was like fire; the thunder seemed to rent the heavens asunder; these, together with the lashing of the waves against the shore made the horrors of this night one never to be forgotten.

The occupants of the cottage would have paid a fabulous price for a place of safety; and to Edith the beauty of the storm she had once anticipated had lost its charms and crouched down in one corner sat the trio, waiting for the storm to subside, or to carry them away to realms of unknown origin.

It did not take long the next morning for them to make ready for their departure, which all expressed was the happiest moment of their lives.

CHAPTER XV

Just a Friend

EDITH had spent so much of her vacation in Illinois that it cut short her stay at home previous to her return to Chicago, where she would resume her musical education.

Her parents saw at a glance that her trip had proved very beneficial in every respect, and felt as though they owed the depth of gratitude to the Walkers for their untiring efforts in which they had so royally entertained their daughter.

She and her mother spent many long hours together, while the latter listened to the interesting description of places and things she had visited while away.

"Edith, I suppose you knew Hugh left for Harvard last Saturday."

"No. I did not know he had gone."

"Did you hear from him while you were away?"

"No, not one word, except what you wrote me in your letter."

"Well, my dear, it is just as well that you cease to care for him; and the sooner the better, as Margaret Page has succeeded in accomplishing all she started out to do. His mother told me she had only received one letter from him while he was gone and he was away some little time.

"As he did not return when he had stated he would, after several days of anxious waiting, she wrote Emily, inquiring why he had not returned and if he was ill.

"The answer came back: He had started back a week ago, at which Mrs. Carter felt very much alarmed in regard to his safety. While she and Mr. Carter were considering the best course to pursue in order to locate him (for his mother would not consider any other advanced theory only that he had met with some foul play), they heard some one whistling and on looking up, saw Hugh step up on the porch.

"They at once demanded an explanation of his actions, but, I am told he passed it off in jest and they don't know to this day where he was, or who he was with."

Edith listened very attentively to all her mother had to say and entertained comparatively few hopes that he would ever venture the renewal of their love.

If Edith's mother had asked her if she wrote Hugh while away she would have answered, "Yes." Too, Hugh, could have borne testimony to the same effect, for the letter he found on his return home had had its lasting impression upon him.

It was on the first night of her arrival at the beautiful country home of the Walker's that against tremendous odds she reached a reasonable conclusion and wrote the fatal letter to Hugh and finished by saying: "From henceforth think of me as: just a friend."

There was an answer to this letter but whether or not it would be given to its rightful owner was a terrible struggle for her mother. Finally deciding it would be wrong not to deliver it, one morning without one word of explanation, she delivered the letter to Edith.

It was not a bulky letter in the least, and contained only a few words which were as follows: "Edith, can't you reconsider? Signed: Always Hugh."

For months he looked in vain for the letter that never came from the one who had said: "From henceforth think of me as, just a friend."

School days gradually wore on with each of them, bringing new duties and heavier tasks than of the days gone by.

As Mr. and Mrs. Melton had accepted an invitation from the Jacksons to spend Christmas in Chicago, Edith would not be at Yorkville for the holiday festivities.

While looking over the *Yorkville Citizen* one evening, a few days prior to her parents' arrival, she was almost awe-struck when she read: "Hugh would spend the holidays in Chicago with a class-mate of his."

"What a coincidence," she soliloquized, as the paper dropped from her hand and she sat gazing out of her window, with a forlorn look upon her face.

The Christmas shoppers were hurrying to and fro down the street eager to reach home and get in out of the cold biting air, as a stiff northwest wind had been blowing all day and as nightfall comes on, it brings with it an occasional snow flurry.

Really she could not recall the thoughts that had preoccupied her mind as she rose somewhat startled, when she answered the summons of the dinner hour. "This is the kind of an evening that makes me melancholy," said Edith as she entered the dining-room.

"Why so, my dear?" said Mrs. Jackson.

"Oh! I can't say, only it reminds me of home and makes me have a lonely feeling as mother used to say, when the climatic conditions were such as they are this evening: 'She was truly glad we were all indoors.' So, I suppose this saying of hers is answerable for my feelings," said Edith.

She could scarcely grasp the thought that Hugh would spend the holidays in Chicago, instead of with Margaret Page, and to make sure, she had not been mistaken she reread the personal column in the paper again, and found it to be identically as she had read it first.

It was just a few days after this when she, in company with Mr. and Mrs. Jackson, stood inside the gates at the station, waiting to clasp her parents in a fond embrace.

It had been some little time since Mrs. Melton had visited her old schoolmate, so with Edith to help her plan, Mrs. Jackson had arranged several little social functions for her guest. During their visit with the Jacksons they made many tours of the city, inspecting some of the larger stores and some of their largest departments. It was while they were on one of their downtown visits they called at the office of Mr. Jackson.

On entering, accompanied by her lady friends, Mrs. Jackson was informed by an office girl that Mr. Jackson was busy. Thanking her, they then sat and rested for a short time busily talking, but at intervals could hear the sound of the deep voice of Mr. Jackson in conversation with one whose voice, Edith thought, sounded very familiar.

She hadn't heard a voice like it since the last time she had talked with Hugh. They arose to leave the office when the girl inquired: "Is there any message you wish delivered?" Mrs. Jackson thanked her and said, "No, nothing special."

They then made their exit. Not knowing who it was, that had been separated from them by a mere partition wall.

That evening at dinner Mrs. Jackson informed her husband they had called to see him but added: "You were

busy.'' ''Yes,'' said he, ''one of the boys from Harvard was in to make me a call, and I can see nothing only a very bright future for him.''

''Who was it?'' inquired his wife.

''Well, wife, do you suppose you would know any more after I had told you than you know now, as I know no few of the boys from here who attend that university.''

Here the subject dropped as it made no material difference to his wife who the party could have been, for she was aware he had many acquaintances he had made in his professional work whom she knew nothing about.

Edith had never lifted her eyes from her plate while they were engaged in this conversation, thinking at any moment she would hear him call the gentleman's name and thereby set her mind at ease. However, she was sorely disappointed and had to live on without this knowledge.

''How utterly foolish,'' said she to herself, ''to think it might have been Hugh for without a doubt he had never given Mr. Jackson, or anyone connected with him a moment's thought since he landed in the city.''

Nevertheless, that night she read the letter again that she last received from him; also took a tiny box from the bottom of her trunk, that revealed the betrothal ring she had once worn with so much pride.

Why had he not answered her question, when she asked it in the letter: ''what she should do with ring?'' She tried it on and wore it until she made ready to retire, then tucked it snugly in its little bed of velvet and replaced it in the bottom of the trunk.

How truly she did wish that Mrs. Jackson had demanded of her husband a more definite answer to her question, for

in this way he would have satisfied his wife's curiosity and, at the same time, set her own mind at ease.

Her parents had had their cup of joy full to the overflowing when on Sunday evening they entered the large spacious auditorium of the church where Edith sang and heard her sweet girlish voice pouring its praises to her maker, and those who have heard her, testify that she is an artist in her line.

Whether or not she would be content to confine herself to the simple rural life at Yorkville, after having attained so much renown, was a question of vital importance to her parents.

"'Seeing is believing,' runs the old adage," said Mr. Melton, after he and his wife had been considering what would be the best course for Edith to pursue after her musical education was at an end. "After having spent so much time and money on her voice, I think, mother, it would be asking a great sacrifice of her if we would venture the theory of her remaining here at Yorkville."

"Yes, David, I take this into consideration but, as she is our only daughter I feel reluctant to give her up and be denied her sweet associations in our home," thoughtfully said the mother. "Had you ever entertained any thoughts considering our move to Chicago if Edith wishes to take up her residence in that city?"

"No, I had not," replied Mr. Melton, with a somewhat surprised expression on his face, and at the same time asking his wife if she thought a man like himself, that had led such an active life as he had, could be contented to confine himself to the life in the city, and finished his remarks by saying: "He would hate to part with his hogs."

"Well,— it's a certainty, David, you can't take them with you, as I saw no pig-stys in Chicago." It was just as well that they dropped the subject for the time being, as Mrs. Melton heard him say as he passed out through the kitchen: "They would have ample time to discuss the matter later."

It was quite a while after the holidays that Edith received a long letter from Emily saying: she and Robert spent Christmas at Yorkville but was much disappointed because she did not get to see Hugh as it did not seem like Christmas when he was away from home.

This was the first time Emily had written anything concerning him for months and almost a year, and why she had mentioned his name Edith could not imagine, unless it was it had been such a disappointment to them all that he was away at the holiday season.

She mused on the pages, dwelling more especially on the one that contained the paragraph concerning Hugh, and softly she said:

"Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind?
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And days of Auld Lang Syne."

The countenance was so peaceful and earnest with the beautiful eyes and their soft drooping eyelashes, that while she thus sat with an occasional teardrop that fell, added more touching beauty to the picture.

Thus she sat for hours absorbed in painful reflections in regard to her decision with Hugh, and never but once, by

word or deed, did he attempt to dissuade her from her resolutions, which she thought, had not been hastily made.

"The mouth with steady sweetness set,
And eyes conveying unawares
The distant hint of some regret,
That harbored there."

She had had many admiring friends who had tried to press their acquaintance, thereby wishing to gain a closer and warmer friendship, but possessing conservative ways she at no time encouraged their favor, as she wished to be nothing more than: "Just a friend."

She was a radical supporter of the old saying "That one real love affair is all one ever has during one's natural life"; although many claim the experience of several, nevertheless, she remained skeptical on this subject.

CHAPTER XVI

Rev. Allen's Death
AND
The Meltons Move to Chicago

AS NOTHING noteworthy has happened that would be of any material interest to our readers concerning our hero and heroine, we will now pass on with the lapse of time, that brings us to the early spring days of Hugh's last year of collegiate education at Harvard.

It was about the middle of the month of February and Mr. Melton thought himself to be the busiest man in the entire community, getting ready for his closing-out sale previous to their move to Chicago.

Guy had now developed into manhood, in whom his father had learned to place great confidence, for he displayed wonderful business qualities in assisting his father in the thoroughbred hog business, as well as with managing the farm work.

It was only recently that Mr. and Mrs. Melton had decided to shift the responsibilities of the farm to the shoulders of their son and retire from their active farm life. It had not required much time and deliberation on the part of the parents to complete their arrangements in regard to the move after Guy had held a lengthy interview with them just a short time previous.

In speaking of Guy's future plans to his wife, Mr. Melton said: "True it is, Guy is very young, but I would much rather see him settle down and begin to do for himself now than to

wait until he is older and perhaps not be as well equipped financially as he is at present. Too, we can see the present, but not the future, so I think it is all for the best.''

''Yes, David, Janet is a sweet girl and will make him an ideal wife, and I am sure she and her mother will find much comfort in the thought that they will be so conveniently located and too,'' she continued, ''there will be many times when she and Guy will need the council of older and more reliable heads.''

The Wilsons lived on an adjoining farm so with Mr. Wilson near at hand, ever ready with his fatherly advice we see no good reason why Guy will not make good in all his efforts.

To Edith the week seemed like months in length as she was overjoyed over the thought of her parents moving to Chicago, thereby giving her the freedom and pleasure of her own dear home.

Not in the least that the Jacksons had not done all possible to make her happy while sharing the comforts of their beautiful home, were thoughts that found no harbor in her mind, for it was only that she longed for the sweet associations that can only be enjoyed in our own, ''Home sweet home.''

The Jacksons were equally delighted over the decision of the Meltons, coming to take their residence of abode in the ''Windy City.''

Just recently there had been a heavy rain together with a light fall of snow, so that now it made it very disagreeable working out among the stock.

This was Thursday morning and Mr. Melton had gone to the house to inquire about the morning mail and on opening the door he said: ''Wife, as my boots are too muddy to come in and I don't want to take the time to remove them, will you please hand me my mail?''

She complied with his request and delivered to him several letters, and among them was one bearing the postmark of Rev. Allen's new charge. He hastily broke the seal and learned Rev. Allen was quite ill and had expressed a strong desire to see him, so the writer suggested, that if possible try and comply with his request, for in all probability this would prove to be his last illness.

During the course of the day he had tried many times to reach some reasonable conclusion in regard to gratifying the wish of his old pastor, but not until after he had partaken of his evening meal and rested himself for a while did he fully decide on definite plans.

From the optimistic point of view he finally concluded, he could absent himself from home for a short time without much inconvenience, and said to his wife: "Such requests as this are comparatively few in life and I for one don't propose to turn it down."

He was tired and retired early as the trip in the morning necessitated early rising, and by the time the morning sun would be flooding his hog-barns with its warm gentle rays he would be passing highways, and byways, at rapid rate behind a big locomotive that would send its whistle along the line like a screeching calliope.

"The summit of my hopes have been reached," said Rev. Allen, when he took Mr. Melton by the hand, while a peaceful smile shone on his face.

Mr. Melton never said, but thought, all the efforts made in the trials for the trip had been satisfactorily settled, by the expression of the minister's face.

Rev. Allen had been in failing health ever since the time of Ray's trouble and it seemed impossible for him to regain his former strength.

Ray was at home now, and was trying to make amends for the past, by doing all possible to establish himself as a young man of sterling qualities.

It was with much pleasure that his father entered into a deep and confidential talk with Mr. Melton concerning Ray's behavior and finished by saying: "He has made amends for the injury."

His weakened condition presented a noticeable difference the following morning and before the little clock on the bedside table ticked off the hour of ten o'clock he silently and softly passed over the river to the other side.

Mr. Melton remained with the family until after the funeral, rendering all the assistance possible, both with service and financial aid, which was so much needed at this time.

He held a long confidential interview with Ray before he took his departure and carried home with him many beautiful and consoling thoughts concerning the young man's future.

He was so agreeably pleased on his return with the commendable way which his wife and Guy had managed things during his absence that in speaking to his wife he said: "On like mission he could take another leave of absence without any uncomfortable feelings or inconvenience."

Being incumbered with many home duties it made it impossible for him to find time to hold an interview with Mr. Carter, before the first of the following week.

The two gentlemen sat for some time engaged in a long conversation at Mr. Carter's place of business, and as Mr.

Melton arose to go, one of the clerks in the store heard Mr. Carter say: "David, remember I want to get in on that."

It was perhaps a month or more after the time mentioned, when a modest yet somewhat attractive monument made its way into the cemetery to mark the last resting place of Rev. Allen.

No one seemed to know from what source it came, only knew it was there and the company who had erected it had only complied with their agreement.

As the days wore on everything about Quiet Dale Farm was of such a hurrying, bustling nature that it seemed only mockery to call its name, for with pigs squealing, the calves bawling, and the hens cackling, it all annoyed Mr. Melton to a certain degree and he declared to his wife: "At one time he had thought the name of his farm implied peace and rest, but now he had changed his mind."

After resting himself for a while after supper he said: "Guy, get your pencil and paper and we will try and finish listing the articles for the sale bills, as this is Thursday, and they must go to the printer not later than Saturday. Mother," he continued, "while we are busy with our work, you had best answer Edith's letter, and tell her it will be impossible for us to be there for her recital."

"Really, David, don't you think we can get away before that time?"

"No, I don't see how we can, for Guy and I have worked on these sale bills for over a week and every time we think we have them ready to submit to the printer, we find there is something we have omitted, or, we have listed some article he wishes to keep," but he added: "they are going to stand approved this time."

The wife wrote Edith a long letter, and vividly impressed upon her mind it was a great disappointment not to be able to attend her recital.

When she retired, Guy and his father were still working on the sale bills and she never knew what time her husband sought his room for repose for she was fast asleep.

There was one pleasant feature connected with the closing-out sale which was: "Black Beauty," would still occupy her old accustomed stall in the barn, as Edith would not sanction her name appearing on the sale bills.

The Wilson family was equally as busy as were the Meltons, for the day following the sale, a pretty little home wedding would take place, with only the relatives and a few close friends as witnesses of the occasion.

These pretty little home weddings seem more impressive in a way than an elaborate nuptial occasion, that calls for much tremendous responsibility of all parties concerned, not to make mention of the extra labor and worry connected with them.

Many in number were the little social gatherings held in honor of Mr. Melton and his wife before they left their quiet home by the roadside that had caused the stranger to pause and look, which only spoke in part of the high esteem and true worth of this noble couple, who had lived profitable, unselfish and irreproachable lives, ever looking unto Him who is the author and finisher of all our good and perfect deeds, for only through Him may we hope to climb the heights of eminence.

"Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime
And departing leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time."

Notwithstanding the usual amount of sorrow, mingled with its equal parts of joy on such an occasion as this, the last day of their stay at the old homestead appeared comparatively short.

The intermingling of tears with that of smiles, as they recall the many incidents connected with the life that for many years had been circled round this dear old hearthstone, had had its ending and the curtain was slowly but surely being lowered, for it was here they had erected the family altar, and too, the birthplace of Edith and Guy.

The last finishing touches had been given the table, prior to the arrival of her dinner guests, when Mrs. Carter in company with her husband awaited their arrival.

To her it was a somewhat solemn occasion, for the feeling existing between the two families seemed to be bound with stronger ties than mere friendship.

They were to spend their last night with the Carters and on the morrow they would set their faces toward a new home and establish for themselves new friends and new interests.

It was during the dinner hour that Mrs. Carter introduced many pleasant memories concerning the acquaintance and friendship of the two families.

"Somehow," said she, "in looking backward tonight we trace the foundation of this true, abiding friendship, to the high school days of our children, and to one especially, do we owe the everlasting debt of gratitude, whose life of splendid influence helped to build the family altar"—she could go no further with her remarks, as the tremulous sound of her voice was very noticeable to all, and caused an occasional teardrop to trinkle down their faces as they sat with bowed heads around the table.

Finally, she continued in a deep gentle voice by saying: "The many removals of friends together with the separation of my children prompts me to say, I too, wish to make a change."

After a short interval of silence, only broken by ticking of the clock, Mr. Carter said: "Now, wife, if you are so dissatisfied with Yorkville and its surroundings, I think perhaps we can make the change."

"Oh! well it isn't that I am finding fault with the town and all its inhabitants, but I would like to be located where the children would have better advantages than Yorkville can offer and too, we would be near Hugh."

Here the subject dropped and the remainder of the evening was spent in conversation in which the two gentlemen, especially, dwelt long on the subject involving Mr. Melton's successor.

"Is Guy twenty-one years of age?" asked Mr. Carter.

"No," replied Mr. Melton, "he will be twenty-one in April."

"Never to be his own man," said the former gentleman with a smile.

"That depends," said the latter; "very true he is young, but I place great confidence in him and have all assurance he will make good. And, too, don't you know I would much rather turn the farm over to him, than to deliver it over to strangers?"

"Well, to be sure, to be sure," said the former gentleman, "but, David, may I say to you, if you ever decide to part with your old home will you give me first chance, as somehow I can't exactly explain it, but it has a sort of pleasing and restful

appearance about it, that prompts me to say I would like to own it."

After waiting for some little time, in order to master his emotional feelings, he said: "Without I meet with many reverses of fortune, it will pass from my hands to my next generation but, if such a calamity should overtake me you may depend on me to grant your request."

Mr. Carter was seated in a large over-stuffed rocker with his legs crossed, and holding between his fingers the lesser half of a cigar, which he had made several efforts to re-light by striking a match on the heel of his shoe; he finally said: "It may be that in course of events I would never be able to purchase this beautiful home of yours, for I might die, as poor as a church mouse."

The two ladies sat in an adjoining room busy all the time, recalling old incidents connected with their friendship and frequently referring to the names of their children; as if seized by some sudden impulse Mrs. Carter sprang to her feet, went over to the table and picked up an envelope and gave it to Mrs. Melton.

At first glance, Mrs. Melton said: "A wedding invitation I suppose?"

"No," answered Mrs. Carter, " a wedding announcement, and don't you think I have forgotten to mention it to Joe?"

"Joe," she called, "had I told you we received an announcement of Margaret's wedding today?"

"No, you did not," answered the excited husband, "and who did she marry?"

"She married a drummer from Boston, and I see they are to make their home there."

"Well! poor man," said Mr. Carter, "perhaps he may be able to live with her as much of his time will be spent away from home, thereby escaping a portion of her nagging and whimsical ways."

This announcement came as a great thunderbolt to the Meltons, as they were still under the impression that Hugh was her best gentleman friend.

The next day as they were en route to Chicago Mrs. Melton thought the distance had increased in miles, and the road as it laid stretched out before them seemed much longer than on any previous trips, or really was it the distance, or was it her eager frame of mind, anxious to impart to Edith the intelligence concerning Margaret's wedding.

As the train sped on, she recalled to mind what Mrs. Carter had said about moving to Chicago in order to be near Hugh, and giving her husband a gentle nudge in the side with her elbow,—he had sat for some time in a half doze of sleep,—she said: "David, did you catch the full meaning of Mrs. Carter's remark, concerning Hugh and his future plans?"

"Umph! What did you say? I was almost asleep."

"Yes, I think you were wholly asleep, for you don't know one word I said to you." She never referred to the subject again, for it was not long until they were passing through the outskirts of Chicago. They could scarcely wait for the reunion that was waiting for them inside the gates at the station, but oh, what a disappointment when they beheld no familiar face except that of Mr. Jackson.

He soon explained Edith was not well, and that it had been a great disappointment to her not to accompany him to the train.

"How long has she been ill?" inquired the anxious parents.

"Since the evening of her recital," was the response, "and we would have sent you word, but she requested us not to do so as you were to come so soon."

"Well!" said Mr. Melton, "we could have arranged our business sooner, and come at an earlier date, had we known of her illness."

They found her under a doctor's care, but she assured them there was no cause for alarm, as she had only contracted a deep cold and would soon be up again, ready to move into the new home.

The news of her illness proved such a shock that her mother forgot to tell her of Margaret's marriage. The mother in company with Mrs. Jackson remained at her bedside throughout the night and her restless condition worried them, for at times she seemed to be in a semi-conscious state of mind.

"She devoted much time and labor in the preparation of her recital in order to insure its success, and the atmosphere she created by the inspiration of her voice far exceeded the greatest expectations of the music lovers of the city," said Mrs. Jackson. Furthering her remarks she said: "Today I have heard her going over some of the songs she sang that night which were: 'I Will Walk With My Love,' an Irish Folk song; 'Dawn,' by Coleridge Taylor, and 'Mighty Lak' a Rose,' by Nevin, and others."

"Really," said the worried mother, "it is evident to me she has over-taxed her nervous powers which together with this cold, makes her case appear very apprehensive to me."

At intervals during the night she would awaken and respond to any questions they would ask, and with a forced smile on her face, extend her hands in the direction of her mother.

Mrs. Melton had gone through so many trying ordeals of late together with a loss of sleep, that she too was almost ready to succumb to a spell of illness.

She had no time to think of herself, for at all hazards she must try and stay on her feet, in order to lend all the assistance possible for the speedy recovery of her daughter.

As the small hours of the night stole softly on, Edith's rest seemed more natural and it afforded an opportunity for the two ladies to get a few hours of rest.

CHAPTER XVII

The Illness

AS EDITH'S rest had been broken during the night by hours of wakefulness, all deemed it advisable to summon the doctor early in the day. This doctor had acted in the capacity of family physician for the Jacksons for many years, so all placed utmost confidence in his medical skill, fully relying on all he might say.

He possessed a very pleasing and sunny disposition and his announcement to the sick room was usually made by the sound of the humming of some lythe little ditty, or, the whistling of some merry tune, thereby carrying with him a certain amount of sunshine. As his low humming could be plainly heard as he ascended the stairs, Edith was aware of his arrival.

After having been introduced to her parents he inquired, as to where they were from, and what their vocation in life.

Mrs. Melton answered his inquiry by saying "Retired farmers."

Being very partial to the sweet restful life of the farm and the many pleasant associations connected with it he said: "I fear you have made a mistake, for in my opinion, there is no place better than the farm."

He spent some little time in the sick room this morning, thoroughly examining his patient, and giving much time to deep study. Walking over to the window he stood for some time with his hands in his pockets, gazing into space, occa-

sionally passing one hand through his hair, yet ever keeping up his low humming.

Suddenly, he turned, walked over to the bed and said: "I guess you would not object to a nurse would you?"

"No, not if you advise one," said Edith.

"Well, your case is not of an alarming nature, yet there is much depending on the care of the patient, and your mother is somewhat worn out by this move, and Mrs. Jackson would find it entirely too much of an undertaking; for all concerned, I think it best for me to bring you a nurse this morning."

Mr. Jackson for some unknown reason seemed over anxious to hasten to his office, but no one seemed to take any notice, or give his actions a moment's thought except his wife.

He no sooner reached his office until he penciled a message that read like this: "Not so well this A. M. Doctor ordered a nurse, parents arrived last evening, and I think it is advisable to come at once. Signed L. F. J."

In a short time the instrument with its familiar sounds of dots and dashes was clicking off the message, that would soon be delivered to its rightful owner.

It did not require much time spent in anxious waiting for a reply, as e'er long the answer came: "Will start immediately."

The nurse arrived at noon at which time the mother and Mrs. Jackson reluctantly submitted the care of the sick room to her professional supervision.

As the days of the week crept slowly by Edith's case was not so alarming to the anxious parents, as the doctor has stated this Thursday morning, "She has passed the crisis,

and with proper care, and no relapse, he thought by the last of the week, they would see a marked improvement in her condition.''

It was about the middle of the afternoon, when the telephone rang, and Mrs. Jackson answered its summons.

She had been waiting for hours for this call, as her husband had said as he left the hall that morning: ''Just as soon as I hear I will call you.''

She returned to the living room and said to Mrs. Melton, ''Please excuse me for a short time, as my husband has just informed me he is expecting a friend from out of the city who will be a guest at dinner this evening,'' said Mrs. Jackson; continuing her remarks she said: ''It will necessitate a late dinner as the train he is coming on is not due until six-fifteen P. M.''

''Oh! I see,'' said Mrs. Melton, ''and I fear Edith's illness will inconvenience you.''

''Oh! no not in the least,'' said Mrs. Jackson, who was becoming more nervous every minute of her life.

She soon entered the kitchen and there delivered several orders to Mariah, the old colored cook who has proved herself very efficient in her line of business for many years and who understood what her employer meant when she said: ''See that the dinner is served in an excellent manner.'' She furthermore gave a few instructions to the house maid concerning a few minor changes to be made in the guest chamber, and all the time trying to wear away her nervous feeling, for fear of detection.

The nearer the time came for her husband's arrival the more nervous she became, and several times had it on the point of her tongue to reveal the secret to Mrs. Melton, who

their guest would be that evening, but every time she was persuaded to keep it a little longer by the recalling of what her husband had said: "A woman can't keep a secret."

In the meantime, Mr. Jackson had held a short interview with the doctor and learned he would call that evening.

It was a well dressed gentleman, of rather tall and slender build, with dark keen penetrating eyes, and who wore a short stubby mustache, mingled with a tinge of gray that gave to the observer the impression that he was a man of mature years. He had walked up and down in front of one particular gate at the Union station with one hand ungloved which he frequently used in consulting his watch in regard to the time for the last twenty minutes.

As the gates were being thrown back and their old familiar click distinctly heard, which announced the arrival of the train, he planted himself squarely in front of it to await the passengers.

In a short time he was grasping the hand of a handsome young man, whose face showed no signs of dissipation, but revealed a sad and troubled expression.

"How is she by this time?"

"Haven't heard since three o'clock when I talked with my wife, who said: 'She was resting very comfortably.' "

"Oh! thank God," said the young man. "Does she know I am coming?"

"No, nor neither do the parents, unless my wife has told them this afternoon, but I don't think she has, although I admit it would be hard for me to keep it.

"You know I haven't fully decided how we are going to proceed with the rest of the play," said Mr. Jackson, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes.

Slapping him gently on the shoulder the other gentleman said: "You have proven yourself pure gold, without one particle of alloy."

"Well! let's hurry on, as we can talk on the way out, for my wife will be waiting dinner for us."

They most certainly made good use of their time, the elder gentleman acting in the capacity of a bureau of information, for the young man at his side plied him with no few questions, until the car stopped at a certain cross street, when the two gentlemen made their exit.

They crossed over to the opposite side of the street where they stood for a few minutes engaged in low conversation; then Mr. Jackson, pointing to a residence only a few doors distant said: "We will now proceed."

Just as they were stepping up on the walk a car stopped in front, and the occupant proved to be none other than the dear old faithful doctor.

After a brief introduction, and the passing of a few hasty remarks, the trio entered together. On hearing footsteps, Mrs. Jackson appeared in the hall, and after a hearty hand-shake, she dispelled all their fears by stating the parents were up in the sick room, at the same time vividly impressing upon their minds, she had kept the secret and it would prove to be a great surprise to all.

Stepping up to her and entwining his arm around her, Mr. Jackson said: "A woman can keep a secret, can't she?"

Motioning in the direction of the living room after removing their coats and delivering up their hats, Mr. Jackson said to his friend: "You may be seated here and I will accompany the doctor upstairs; then if we deem it advisable I will come and call for you."

Hugh waited for what he thought to be hours and would have sat if he could; but instead he paced back and forth from one end of the room to the other in frenzied state of mind until he forced the perspiration to trickle down his cheeks.

The nurse had displayed wonderful taste in the arrangement of Edith's hair that afternoon, so together with the rose she held in her hand, occasionally inhaling its fragrance she made a very pleasing picture in the room as the doctor and Mr. Jackson entered.

"Well! how do you feel this evening?" inquired the doctor.

"I feel some better," said Edith.

"You are looking better," said Mr. Jackson.

Her eyes met his with a smile and, "I thank you."

"Do you feel able to entertain a caller, or rather an old acquaintance for a short time?" asked the doctor.

After hesitating a moment she said: "I believe it depends on who it is," and at the same time her eyes were searching the face of her parent who was standing at the foot of her bed.

"Who is it, doctor?" she asked.

Turning to Mr. Jackson he said: "Will you please go down and bring them up, as they may answer her question for me in person."

He immediately complied with the doctor's request, and in a moment their footsteps were heard on the stairs and as they approached the doorway, the elder gentleman stepped a trifle to the rear, in order to let his friend proceed him into the room. Hugh passed the father and mother all unmindful of their presence, walked directly to the bed, where lay the idol of his life, bending down threw his arm around the form

and kissed the sweet white face that lay so calm and motionless upon the pillow.

Stepping over to where the parents stood, as onlookers, he then took them by the hand, but could utter not a word.

Needless to say it was indeed a happy meeting to witness, and one that brought tears to the eyes of all in the room; even the doctor found an occasion to press his handkerchief into service, either to mop the perspiration from his brow or the tears that had fallen down his cheeks.

The solemnity of the occasion was broken by Mr. Jackson who was renowned for his wit and humor, when he said: "I have been playing the leading role in a drama for many, many months, yes for the past two years, so tonight, as the grand finale is about to be played, I wish to shift the responsibilities of my important part in the play to the shoulders of my young friend here, who is able in every way, to play it in a much more satisfactory manner."

No one in the room could interpret the meaning of this speech except his wife and Hugh, although they seem to read somewhere between the lines, when they declared him a star in his line. Mrs. Jackson was the first to leave the room as she was anxious to announce dinner, for it had been waiting for some little time. As the doctor arose to go, he turned to the nurse and said: "Please see that Miss Melton doesn't keep late hours this evening."

"How late, doctor?"

"Oh!—about nine o'clock," said he.

After the family in company with their guests had departed to the dining-room, where they all felt they could do justice to the sumptuous repast, the nurse said to Edith: "I

think he is beyond the average in looks and now please tell me how it was that he came to be here tonight?''

''No, I can't, as he will have to explain that himself later on, for I knew nothing of his coming,'' replied Edith.

Presently, their conversation was interrupted by the voice of Mrs. Jackson calling the nurse to dinner and added: she would send Mr. Carter to keep her patient company during her absence.

After two years of separation, filled with tears, heartaches, disappointments, and regrets, comes the reunion, heavily freighted with the same old ardent love as of yore, for when true love casts its anchor in the harbor of a heart, it will withstand the storms of time and constant lashing of the waves, for the harbor is safe, for ''Love beareth all things''; rejoiceth with the truth, and ''love never faileth.''

Somewhat awed by the solemnity of her countenance when he returned to her room, he stooping over her asked: ''If the shock had caused any ill effects.''

He was reassured that nothing of this nature had occurred, when she softly whispered in his ear, ''I am so glad you are here.''

It was past the hour of midnight before anyone sought their rooms to retire except Edith, who had long been enjoying one of the most natural rests she had had for some time, for the serenity of her countenance spoke only in part of the deep pleasure she had derived from this short evening spent with Hugh.

During the latter part of her girlhood days spent at Yorkville, she gradually, and unconsciously, learned to lean upon his strong pure love and found in his society and its continuance a peaceful and abiding happiness.

They had differed in some respects, yet, during the time that has passed with the differences and misunderstandings, there had never been a day since, but what they had both felt the need of each other's society, and especially Hugh, who had been guided by the sweet unconscious influence of a pure innocent minded girl who had been the means of shaping the future destiny of a strong and noble man.

The following morning the doctor was so agreeably pleased with the remarkable improvement of his patient that after consulting her record of the day previous, he turned to the nurse and said: "Is it due to my medical skill, or your commendable care, or the presence of the young gentleman downstairs?"

With a hearty laugh she replied: "I think it is due to the combination of things."

To their remarks, Edith had to indulge in a good hearty laugh that was heard by the two gentlemen that were seated on the lower step of the stairway in the hall below, and who wondered what it was that had caused so much excitement.

The doctor gave a few instructions concerning some slight changes in the medicine, and said, as he picked up his medicine case, he would not call again before Sunday, unless summoned.

"When may I sit up, doctor?" said Edith.

"Not before Sunday, and if your temperature should come up in the mean time not then."

After the nurse had spent some little time with her patient in order to make her appear her prettiest, and taking extra pains with the arrangement of her room and especially the bouquets that were conspicuous in their several places she said: "Now you are ready to receive morning callers."

All willingly surrendered their presence in the sick room for Hugh, whose stay would be brief, on account of heavy work during the remainder of the weeks spent at the university.

It was with a heavy sigh of regret, that she made known to him what the doctor had said in regard to her sitting up before he would have to leave.

"Oh! don't worry, my darling," said Hugh, "for I am indeed glad you are able to lie here and talk with me, which has filled my cup of joy full to the overflowing, for this reunion has come to us sooner than I had expected, as Mr. Jackson and myself had planned it for the Easter time."

It was during these few days he spent with her that was revealed many mysterious incidents that had come into her life during the past two years and had caused her much annoyance and anxiety as to know from what source they had all come.

Vividly he related the facts concerning the mysterious roses she received while at Old Salem Chautauqua, and impressing upon her mind the hard struggle he had had in not making his presence known to her.

He furthermore stated, it was he who was in the office with Mr. Jackson the afternoon that she in company with Mrs. Jackson and her mother had called, along with many other happenings, that proved to Edith he had remained loyal throughout the whole enduring time, and who now to her was a man of true and lasting worth.

When he had finished, and the last words of his bold chivalry had fallen from his trembling lips, he was worthy the victor's crown, and the winning laurels that are won only by the faithful.

Together with his handkerchief, intermingled with kisses, he soon succeeded in quenching the avalanche of tears that Edith was shedding and soon brought the smile to her face instead.

He refrained from making any mention of the letter he lost, on account of her weakened condition, but said: "In the near future I wish to explain other things to you which I think are answerable for all our misunderstanding."

When the postman delivered the mail Saturday afternoon, Mrs. Jackson found it contained a letter for Hugh.

It was from his mother, as he had hastily written her a brief note stating Edith's illness, the day he started for Chicago.

After reading it he said: "Edith, there are so many messages to be delivered to you, with your permission I will read you the entire contents."

"Certainly," said Edith, "I should like to hear it."

A part of the letter was as follows: "We were indeed sorry to hear of Edith's illness but more than pleased to learn you were with her and do hope she is much improved. Stay, if possible, until you know she is out of danger.

"On your return come *via* Yorkville, if it is only for a few hours' stay, as I feel as though I must see you."

"Oh! Hugh that is indeed a sweet letter," said Edith, after he had folded it and put it in his pocket; continuing she said: "As she wants to see you so badly, couldn't you leave here a little sooner in order to make them a short visit?"

"No, Edith, I don't see how I can, for I am supposed to be at the university not later than Tuesday morning in time for class work, so I think it is an utter impossibility."

After thinking the matter over for some time and making some inquiries in regard to the train service he learned he could make the return by the way of Cincinnati, thereby get a short lay-over of about two hours. He wired his mother to this effect, who answered immediately saying: "they would meet him there."

"That is a great idea, Hugh, and one that will make them feel much better, for you realize what a disappointment it would have been to them," said Edith.

"When did you tell them to meet you?" asked Edith.

"Tomorrow evening at seven-thirty," said Hugh, "and my last visit with you for a while will have its ending this evening, only I must be granted the privilege of saying good-bye in the morning," he added.

She could not speak, but nodded her approval.

The beautiful bouquet of American Beauty roses that had been placed near the bed seemed to nod their approval also as they were swayed back and forth by a gentle breeze that was playing with the curtains as they hung in their soft graceful folds at the windows.

Slipping her hand under her pillow, she withdrew a tiny little velvet case and said as she handed it to him: "Here is the precious little jewel you were inquiring about this morning."

He removed it from its place of concealment and placing it on the little white finger and sealing it with a kiss, said: "Not to be removed, until I see you on my return."

On the following morning, when the early sunshine streamed warm and bright in at her window, her true devoted Hugh, in company with Mr. Jackson, stood at the station, waiting for the caller to announce the time of his train.

As Hugh stood with his hands folded across the handle of his traveling bag, Mr. Jackson said: "Well, my boy, how do you think the two attorneys managed things?"

"In a very creditable manner," responded Hugh, "and as Edith's condition is no worse, I am real glad it has happened this way, instead of at Easter as we had arranged."

Just then the caller announced his train and after a moment spent in parting, he was gone.

After the nurse had served the patient her breakfast and the necessary arrangements of the room had been made she noticed a flushed appearance on Edith's face, and after taking her temperature, said: "I don't think you will sit up any today."

"Why?" inquired Edith.

"Because, you must lie perfectly quiet and rest," was all the reason the nurse stated.

Again, during the course of the day her temperature was taken and shortly after the doctor was at the bedside.

They could not account for the relapse unless it was, that the excitement of Hugh's departure had exhausted her strength, as her illness had made her very nervous and weak.

Monday came and went with only slight changes in her condition, but Tuesday morning she seemed much brighter than she had at any time since Hugh's departure, having enjoyed a night of almost unbroken rest.

In the afternoon she said: "Mother, it is probable that Hugh has written me from Cincinnati and if so, I wonder whether at this time a letter is not near at hand."

"Well, Edith, just as soon as the postman comes we will know," and as her mother was uttering the last words, they

heard the voice of Mrs. Jackson calling in a vociferous manner saying: "A letter for Edith and from Cincinnati."

As the nurse delivered the precious document to its owner she said: "I wonder if the doctor has changed any of his prescriptions in this, or sent any new instructions to your nurse."

Edith had to laugh as she broke the seal to learn its contents, and after reading it she said: "He did send you some instructions."

"What were they?" inquired the excited nurse.

"He said to tell you, to take good care of me, and see that I made a speedy recovery, if you wanted him to hold you in everlasting remembrance."

"Oh! dear," said the nurse, "please tell him for me when you write, that I heard all this many times before he took his departure."

"Did Mr. and Mrs. Carter see him in Cincinnati?" said Mrs. Melton.

"Yes, but not for any length of time as his train left earlier than he had thought it would."

"Did he say how long they were together?" inquired the mother, feeling anxious for the parents who had made the sacrifice in order to see their son.

"Yes," said Edith, "about an hour and a half."

"Oh! well that is not so bad, for in a way they were repaid for their efforts," remarked the mother.

"How do you think you are going to like your new home, mother?" said Edith.

"I can't tell yet, as we have only placed the things in the house and nothing is put in order yet, but tomorrow," she continued, "if you still show improvement, Mrs. Jackson

and the house maid and myself, with your father's assistance, will try and get everything in order.''

Continuing she said: ''It is so conveniently arranged and so pleasantly located together with its beautiful finished interior, I see no reason after you are able to be with us why we won't be happy.

''I fear, Edith, your place in the home is not of long duration although this comes to all parents, and your happiness will be our happiness.''

''How silvery the echoes run—
Thy Will be done—Thy Will be done.''

CHAPTER XVIII

Worthy of the Prize

AS THE spring days gradually lengthened, and the warmth of the sunshine became more noticeable, it was then, Edith began to take on new life and regain her former strength.

Her parents had been comfortably and pleasantly located in their new home for some little time before it was thought advisable for Edith to be permitted to cross its threshold.

There was a vacancy in the Jackson home occasioned by her removal, but the inspiration of this sweet and lovable character had left its lasting memories, entwined around their hearts.

Many letters, filled with the true faithful trust that ere long she would be her dear old self again, came from Hugh.

He had also recently stated: on account of some ability as an orator, it would be his privilege to carry off certain honors of his class. It was a joyous day to him when he received her letter stating: she had attended church that morning and would occupy her old accustomed place in the choir that evening.

Jubilant over the thought that soon she would be like the Edith of old, his heart was so filled with ecstasy, as he perused its pages, he said aloud: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow." Continually, he had been earnestly pleading in his letters for her to be more considerate of herself and feelings,

by not complying with the many, many requests that came to her through her music loving friends.

While she thoroughly enjoyed her music, she had other interests now, that would occupy much of her time and thoughts, thereby lessening her music interests.

Her physical condition had improved sufficiently for her to comply with the requests that came to her to contribute her voice for the Easter service Sunday morning.

She had spent some little time in the preparation of her special selections, together with assisting the choir with their program, that Saturday evening before Easter found her somewhat wearied by her week's labor.

On her return home that afternoon after the last rehearsal, which all pronounced splendidly rendered, she found a most pleasing and pleasant surprise awaiting her.

The postman had delivered that afternoon a box of flowers, together with a large package that her parents were as eagerly waiting as she, anxious to learn its contents.

Having been packed very securely, she was very careful about disengaging it from its box, having been labeled, "Fragile."

To her utmost astonishment, she withdrew a picture which proved to be a likeness of herself, and a very commendable piece of workmanship, that had been reproduced from the little picture Hugh had taken of her at Coleman spring four years ago, this Easter.

She went in raptures over it, then next untied the box that contained a huge bouquet of English violets.

"Oh! mother," she said: "is there not a letter too?"

"Yes, Edith, it is there by the picture."

Eagerly she read its pages and soon learned the secret of the picture, and what a disappointment it had been to him not to be able to be with her on Easter.

After she had finished reading her letter and they were commenting on the picture and the wonderful talent the artist had displayed, her father said: "I see he is not content with the picture but intends to possess its subject."

Continuing his remarks, he said: "I know of no other young man I could take by the hand and say, you are worthy of the prize, for without a doubt, he has proven himself a gentleman of true worth, and now we can commend you to his keeping with our parental blessing."

During the evening much time was spent in admiring the picture, and it was a hard matter to determine which had the most deserving merit of true likeness, Edith or Black Beauty.

"I shall always be the rightful owner of Black Beauty," said Edith, pointing in the direction of the picture, "and as Hugh knew how much I prized my noble horse no doubt that is why he had the picture made."

"Well," said Mr. Melton, "it is now past my bed-time, and I will retire, but you and your mother may remain as long as you desire, enjoying the companionship of the picture."

The mother and daughter had sat for some time, enjoying one of their old time pleasant evenings together, and deep sonorous sounds had been issuing forth from Mr. Melton's room for some time, that indicated he was not troubled with insomnia, when they were suddenly frightened by the announcement of a late caller.

Mrs. Melton in an excited voice bade her husband awaken and dress as hurriedly as possible and answer the summons of the door.

In his excitement to dress as quickly as possible, to be sure, everything went wrong: after trying for several times to put both feet into one leg of his trousers, which he learned would not work, he soon succeeded in adjusting them so as to insure him safety in retaining them, and started in the direction of the door.

Notwithstanding the fact that the head of the family had made himself presentable in as quick order as possible, the impatient caller blurted out in a gruff voice, at the same time giving the button on the door a second push saying: "A messenger boy, please open the door."

Mrs. Melton preceded her husband by a few paces and reached the door first and opening it the messenger said: "A telegram for Miss Edith Melton."

Edith was all excitement, for fear something very unexpectedly had happened to Hugh, and the mother was equally as much concerned when the announcement of a telegram was made, thinking perhaps it might be some sad news of her only son. Edith read the message, and stated to the messenger, it had been delayed in its delivery.

"This was sent out to the house this afternoon," said the boy, "but found no one at home, and as you have no phone it delayed the message."

"Well," said Mr. Melton, "it is just an oversight, or rather neglect on my part, and I will attend to this matter the first of the week, and have a phone installed."

In retracing his steps in the direction of his room he said: "What was the message, Edith?"

"En route home, will be in Chicago Sunday."

"HUGH."

"I can't understand why he is coming," said Edith, "after he has written, saying it was impossible to come."

"Well, he will explain when he comes," said her mother, "so I think it is time for us to retire."

The Easter morning dawned bringing with it a flood of sunshine, but later on was obscured by the clouds that had gathered and were overhanging the sky.

Edith spent much time and displayed elegant taste in making her toilet for church having laid to one side, a beautiful black satin canton crepe for her Easter gown, with trimmings of black lace that added to the elegance and distinction of the gown.

Not only for the eyes of the curious that would fill the spacious auditorium, but as well, for one whom she did hope to catch a glimpse of in the vast congregation had she dressed with unusual care.

The Easter services had ended, and the vast congregation had scattered, going different directions in a hurry, scurry, manner in order to reach home before the downpour of rain that was ready at any moment to descend upon them.

After entering the car Edith gave the door a quick jerk, leaned over in one corner of the seat and gave a long profound sigh, as Mr. Melton hurried his family home ahead of the rain.

"Easter bonnets and gowns stand a fair chance to get a good drenching," said Mr. Melton, as he drove past a cross street where a large crowd was waiting for a car, as the long peals of thunder sounded more closely and the big drops of rain hit against the windshield on his car.

After partaking of a sumptuous Easter dinner and while they were still seated at the table Mr. Melton said: "I don't think I ever heard an Easter sermon delivered like the one I heard this morning, and I must say Dr. Kemper did ample justice to his text."

"Yes," replied his wife, "and was not that a very unusual subject for a discourse: 'The Unconscious Influence?' "

"Yes, indeed, it really was; and, mother, what chapter in John was it that he based his thoughts on for his remarks?" asked Mr. Melton.

"It was St. John, twentieth chapter, and the third to ninth verses, dwelling especially on the thought where Simon Peter and the other disciple came to the sepulcher and as they ran on together, the other disciple ran the faster, came to the sepulcher first and stopped, then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, then went in the other disciple also."

"Mother," said Mr. Melton, "that is the part of his discourse I could not recall, so if it was the unconscious influence of Simon Peter that prompted the other disciple to enter and if this influence was manifest during the time of the disciple, equally so it is at this day and age of the world too. I think it was a wonderfully interesting sermon."

Continuing he said: "It is not the conscious acts of life that count for much, but the unconscious deeds that build character, and speak of our true worth."

The hours of the afternoon wore on, the evening church bells had rung, calling the people to the house of worship, and the mist of rain together with an occasional flake of snow was visible to Edith as she silently sat in a shadowy corner of the sun parlor, watching the street lights that sent their rays of

light through the thin dainty white curtains that hung at the windows, and the passengers that got off the cars at the crossing only a few rods distant.

It was a strange evening. The outside elements were chill and disagreeable and all pedestrians seemed anxious to get in out of the inclement weather.

It was about eight o'clock when a gentleman with a traveling bag stepped from the car, crossed over to the opposite side of the street, stood for a moment, as if trying to locate himself, then hurriedly as if seized by some sudden impulse turned in the direction of the Melton home, which was brilliantly lighted except the sun parlor, which had no light save that afforded by the street light and from the adjoining room.

Almost petrified, yet filled with delight Edith had watched the proceedings of the stranger until she became thoroughly convinced who he was, when he turned into the walk that led to the house.

In an instant she sprang to the door when the two stood for a moment, Edith being held in a warm embrace.

"Oh! Hugh," she sobbed, "I had almost given up in despair."

"Don't worry, I am here at last, but have had a hard time to make the trip."

"You see," said he, "I came by the way of Yorkville, then only had time to spend four hours at home in order to complete the rest of my journey and make the return schedule time."

Taking out his watch he said: "Can't spend much time with you, after making such desperate efforts to reach here sooner, as I leave tonight at eleven fifty-five."

"Oh! Hugh, it has been such a sacrifice on your part and entirely too much of hardship for you to make these flying trips," said Edith.

"No, not in the least;" and taking both her hands in his he said: "How splendid you are looking, and it is almost unbelieving to me, for I have been much concerned about you since I last saw you for fear you were not gaining in strength as rapidly as you should."

She led him from one room to another displaying the new home, which he pronounced very attractive and beautiful, and last for his inspection was her music room where hung directly over the piano the picture that had just found its way into the home.

"How do you like it, Edith?"

"Oh! it is perfectly wonderful, and I just simply go wild about it."

Drawing her to him and kissing the hand that was jeweled with the betrothal ring he said: "Edith, the time is not far distant when your lover will object to these long tedious hours spent in your studio, and your compliance with so many requests to gratify the whimsical wishes of the public, for," he added, "he can feast on much of your talent himself."

He then led her back to the living room and seated her on a luxuriously padded sofa where they spent the remainder of his visit.

"As my time is limited with you this evening, and there are so many things I wish to tell you, I will have to hasten, or I will find myself ready to take my departure without having fairly begun.

"Edith, there are certain incidents in our lives answerable for our two years of heartaches, misunderstandings, tears,

and disappointments, all on account of some stupid mistake on my part, or because we did not understand. Now with your permission, I wish to ask you a question.''

''Go on, Hugh.''

''Well, did you find a letter I had lost?''

''Yes.''

''Where did you find it?''

''In the hall.''

''Did you read it?''

''Yes, I picked it up, took it in my room and woman-like I read it.''

''Then what happened?''

''Oh! Hugh, I don't like to tell you.''

''Yes, but do, please do, for I must know all tonight, and return to my work with a heart filled with joy to know all these little common differences have been satisfactorily straightened up, and this is why I have made such an effort to come.''

She began and related the whole incident and how she sobbed and wept until her heart was almost broken, and for a short time lived over again the deep sorrow of that terrible night.

He sat silently listening to every word as it fell from her lips and when she had finished, he gently drew her to him and said: ''Did the letter contain any information that led you to think we were intimate friends?''

''No, I think not,'' said Edith.

''Now, believe me, Edith, that was the first and last letter I ever received from her and that one never received an answer. When I went to visit Emily, you no doubt thought I decided to remain longer in order to spend more time in her

company, but such was not the case, and not only you, but the folks at home were perfectly furious and demanded an explanation of my actions, but to this day they don't know where I was. Edith, I have spared neither time nor money in order to keep myself well informed about you at all times, and much gratitude indeed I owe to my faithful old friend Jackson who has proven himself a friend of true worth."

Looking him squarely in the face, while a rueful smile played round her mouth, she said: "I now see why it was, that Mr. Jackson always found some objectionable qualities with all the young men who tried to force their acquaintance with me," said Edith.

"Exactly," said Hugh, giving one of his big hearty laughs, that could be plainly heard where the parents were seated reading in an adjoining room.

"Now, Edith, since I have told you all; do you believe me to be truthful and true?"

"Most assuredly, and will you forgive me for ever mistrusting your true manly love for me?"

"Yes, I truly forgive you, for I was partly to blame," and taking from his pocket a weather-beaten envelope that showed signs of long usage, he said: "Things had reached the crisis when you wrote these lines, stating, 'just a friend,' so now, I think it has served its time of life so I suggest that we together destroy it."

So the letter that had severed the engagement was torn into small pieces and thrown into the waste basket.

"Another thing, Edith, I wish to speak to you about is this: do you remember on Saturday when I was here during your illness, and while the doctor was up in your room you gave such a hearty laugh that could be heard downstairs?"

"Yes, I recall the time."

"Well! your father and I were seated on the lower step of the stair and when we heard you laugh, your father said: 'she is much better this morning,' and I answered by saying, 'yes, my prayers have been answered.'

"He turned to me, took me by the hand and with the other one laid on my shoulder in his dear old fatherly way said: 'My boy, you are worthy of the prize.'

"I tried to find words to express myself, but being overcome by emotional feelings by the sudden and unexpected statement, I must say that was once in my life that all power of speech seemed to have forsaken me." After he had finished and waiting awhile, the silence was broken when he said: "Edith, I have traveled many miles to spend these few hours with you, but oh my! the happiness I have derived has more than paid the debt in full."

Withdrawing his watch from his pocket he reluctantly stated the hour for his departure had arrived, and arising to go he said; "Do you remember a part of a poem I read to you one night in the moonlight at 'Quiet Dale Home?' "

"Yes," she replied.

"Well, it re-occurs to me again this evening, so don't forget the words."

In a moment he had said good-bye, the door had closed behind him, and he had stepped out into the night.

The spring was filled with busy days as Edith's musical engagements, together with studio hours, required much of her time and gave place for little else except a few of her own personal interests that were crowding into her life, as with the passing of each day brought a little nearer the early summer days when the birds sing the loudest, the flowers

bloom the brightest, for 'tis then, the heart is turned to love. She was simply delighted when she received Hugh's letter stating he would be valedictorian of his class.

He had worked with untiring energy for the coveted place on the program and wishing it to be a complete surprise to her had withheld the intelligence as long as he deemed advisable.

Together with the letter came the commencement program of his class, with his name occupying a prominent place on the program. These college commencements mean much with their elaborate exercises that involve talent of unusual class, together with the presentation of diplomas, which adds another brilliant feature to the occasion. Four years of college life! Hugh recalled the days of being a freshman, when the college campus, and in fact everything, but himself, had looked so big and commanding, when the days had seemed like weeks, and the weeks like months.

And now it was all over, and all were gradually growing old, he would soon have to say good-bye, with no renewal of friends on the opening day in the fall.

It was with much pride that Mr. and Mrs. Carter sat in that spacious and brilliantly lighted auditorium and listened to the eloquent address to the class, delivered in a manner save no other than a natural born orator could have done.

Hugh had spent no little time in the preparation of his speech, which won for him the distinguished honors of his class. He had striven hard for efficiency, and now his efforts had been crowned with great success, for just standing on the threshold of his professional life, he looks back to his boyhood days of the idle dreamer of the yesterday, but today he is living in the realms where dreams come true.

There were no tears of regret, no unhappy mood when he bade a last adieu to Harvard and its faculty, who had labored hard for his future success, when the door closed behind him never to respond to his summons again.

As he hurriedly strode down the walk he glanced backward and beheld the magnificence and grandeur of the ivy-covered buildings that stand so quiet and peaceful among the trees, with their towers looming heavenward, with the beautiful campus as it lay stretched out before it; it reminded him of a village he had once read about, that sleeps along the banks of the river Thames.

"Well, Hugh, we have been waiting for you for some little time," said Mr. Carter, as Hugh hurried into the station after checking his baggage.

"Oh! my, these are strenuous days on a fellow," said Hugh, taking out his handkerchief and mopping the perspiration from his brow, as he stood with hat in hand explaining why he had kept them waiting.

"We were afraid you were going to miss the train," said the father.

"Well, it would have been unavoidable," said Hugh, "as I have rushed myself as much as possible."

"Never fear, son," said the mother, "we had decided to wait for you no matter if it necessitated waiting for the next train."

The homeward-bound train was one of the most pleasant features of the whole affair for Hugh was a firm believer in the saying, "Where your treasure is, there let your heart be also." So the train was taking him a little nearer Chicago.

Many times his father had tried to learn the full details concerning Hugh's future plans, but each time had been un-

successful in his efforts as Hugh would only say it was a secret and he would have to wait. He was indeed tired after the last week of college life was over, for it had been one ovation after another, and for all concerned he was really glad it was all over.

"This seems like home once more," said his mother, "to have you occupy your old accustomed place at the family table, and enjoy a real good visit with you which, to me has been a long time, since you have given us much of your presence."

"Well, mother, I am at your service, ready to do your bidding for a few days, so whether it be you wish me to drive with you, or remain here at home and visit with you it matters not to me."

While they were driving that afternoon and had enjoyed a long delightful drive which the mother declared the finest she had taken in months, she said to him: "I fear this will be your last visit home for sometime."

"Now, don't let's get sentimental," said Hugh, "and 'don't cross the bridge before you get to it.'"

"Don't you know, Hugh, I don't want to live here at Yorkville any longer," said the mother.

"Where do you want to go, mother?"

"I would like to move to Chicago, where I could be near you, and too," she added, "the children would have better advantages than they can get here. Can't you say something to your father in regard to the matter, that might have some weighty effect upon him?"

"Well, we will both work on dad's better judgment, and it may be that we can accomplish our aim."

The next morning he leisurely strolled off in the direction of the store and on entering found his father busy at his desk.

On glancing up he saw Hugh standing at the desk, so laying down his pen, he said: "Hello, son, be seated; it seems like old times to have you drop in to call."

"Yes," said Hugh, "I was out for a walk and thought I would call for a few minutes."

"I expect you are getting a little restless," said the father, with a broad grin on his face, "and will soon be riding the cushions again traveling toward Chicago."

"Yes, no doubt," said Hugh, "and I only wish you folks were going with me, for," he continued, "I don't see anything here in Yorkville very attractive and I am quite sure I would never think of taking up my residence in a little burg like this."

"Well, don't you know, my son, I have been thinking of this very self same thing this morning, and as your mother is perfectly unhappy here, and wants to live near you, it maybe that in a short time we will be following the children around, like two old fools."

Hugh had to laugh in spite of himself, thinking he had gained the information he was seeking, without making known to his father the purpose of his call.

"How is business, dad?"

"Oh! everything is dull now, as you know the busy season is over."

"Would you go into business, or would you retire?" said Hugh.

"No, I would not retire, for with nothing to do I would actually go crazy."

That evening Hugh retired early, but the low hum of voices across the hall in his parents' room had a tendency to keep him awake for awhile, but he finally went to sleep with a broad grin on his face, feeling he had won his first case and that the decision would be handed down in favor of his mother.

The following morning the mother was in an unusually happy mood, and she and Hugh spent the greatest part of the forenoon together, but what passed between them we do not know nor neither do we know what Mr. Carter said to her the evening previous, but this we do know that: in the afternoon the furniture dealer had an occasion to visit Mr. Carter's place of business to look over a business proposition he had been considering for some little time.

"So, you are leaving this morning?" said Mr. Carter, as he arose from the breakfast table next morning.

"Yes," said Hugh, "I had thought I would not go until Saturday, but I have decided to go this morning, as there are some business interests I wish to look after the first of the week. Then too, I know Edith is expecting me any moment."

"Well, son, you might inquire about residence property out in the locality of the Meltons, and if you hear of anything you think would interest me, you might wire me and I will come up to look it over."

"All right, dad, I will make that part of my business; and it may be that Mr. Jackson can be of some help to me as you know it was through him Mr. Melton purchased his property."

"When may I expect you home again?" said his mother, as he came to say good-bye.

"Oh! I can't say at present, but Edith is going to make Guy and Janet a visit before long and I think I will run down while she is here."

CHAPTER XIX

Jackson and Carter, Attorneys at Law

"JUST step inside and see how you like our new quarters," said Mr. Jackson, after he and Hugh had walked down the hall inspecting the inscription on the doors of a suite of office rooms.

The long cherished dreams of boyhood days had at last come true, and there was his name, standing out in bold relief upon the door.

He could scarcely believe his own eyes as he beheld the neat and carefully selected furnishings of the rooms.

"I have had a hard time to secure these adjacent rooms," said the elder attorney, "for the party who occupied them seemed inclined to be a little obstinate in the matter after they learned I wanted immediate possession. However, after a little persuasion on my part, and paying a month's rent for them they finally decided to transfer their quarters to the fifth floor.

"You see," he continued, "I have been established here so long that I dreaded the thought of making a change, so by both using this reception room, it will afford ample room for both of us, and at the same time, we will each have the same amount of floor space."

Hugh had stood almost speechless, but had fully caught the meaning of every word that had been said, and his face wore a somewhat bewildered look when he was conducted into

his own private office that overlooked the street below, with its furnishings, identically the same as those of Mr. Jackson.

Everything had been done possible to help further the success of the young attorney who was just entering his professional career, and with Mr. Jackson back of him ever ready to counsel him with good and substantial advice, we see no good reason why he will not meet with success.

Going back to his office rooms, Mr. Jackson said: "I will still occupy my old accustomed place for no other rooms would seem like home to me." Pointing to a chair he said, "Be seated, Hugh, I wish to talk with you for a short time, as we hurriedly run over some of the work I have outlined for you to do.

"My work has been very heavy at times and in fact is most of the time, so I am going to shift some of the responsible duties over to you, for I am getting along in years, and I find it a little too heavy for me at times."

"Well," said Hugh, "I fear you will find me a rather incompetent partner on the start, as you know I am inexperienced."

"Never fear," replied Mr. Jackson, "you must entertain no such thoughts as fail, as I place more confidence in you than that; besides you are the type of a man to make good, judging your future by the past, knowing you are not easily discouraged," he added with a smile and a mischievous wink of his eye, that Hugh understood.

"Thank you," said the young man, "and I will do my utmost, in order you may never have cause to regret the steps you have taken to assist me in my work."

"Have you told Edith yet?" inquired Mr. Jackson.

"No, and she has worried no little," said Hugh, "fearing I would find it difficult to establish myself. It has been hard at times for me to withhold the secret, but as you wished it to be a complete surprise I have refrained from making any mention of my future plans."

"Well! you are going to receive your first client this afternoon," said Mr. Jackson, "as there was a lady here yesterday wishing to obtain legal advice concerning some little difficulty in regard to the rent on one of her tenant houses. As I was too busy to consider the matter I told her to call again this afternoon, so the sooner you wade in and get your feet wet the better it will be," added the elder attorney.

The Jackson and Carter offices were located on the third floor of one of the office buildings in the downtown district, and the former's name had been associated with court proceedings for many years, being recognized as a prominent and highly respected lawyer.

He had figured in some of the most interesting cases that had come before the courts, and now that Hugh had stepped into the office with a man of so much prominence gave no little cause for much public comment.

Hugh received his first client that afternoon when a very dignified little old grandmother in company with Mr. Jackson stepped into his private office and after introducing his partner and assuring her he would do all possible for her interests he then made his exit.

After carefully scanning the face of the young attorney, and with a little hesitancy she said: "You are quite young and inexperienced, aren't you?"

These questions were very unexpected to Hugh and after a moment's pause and being possessed of great shrewdness he

said: "Beg pardon, but what was it you wished some legal advice about this afternoon?"

Fully grasping the thought that she had been too presumptuous in asking the young man these personal questions, it was with a little timidity that she stated the full particulars concerning her case.

When she arose to go he assured her she need entertain no fears, as all would be well in the end. Somehow she felt just as well satisfied with the advice she had obtained from the young man in question, as though she had been counseled by Mr. Jackson, who for many years had been her legal advisor.

She rather liked the open frank expression of the young man's face, and as she retraced her steps down the hall she was in deep study as to know where he was from, and if he was a near relative of the Jacksons, and too, if his mother was living.

Hugh's first day at his office had been filled with busy hours, as he had met no few of Mr. Jackson's friends, who had congratulated him and extended best wishes for future success.

Before leaving the office he wrote a long letter home and enclosed one of his business cards, and after reading it over he said half audibly: "Now this will set dad's mind at ease, as I think he has been conjuring thoughts that I would fail in all my efforts. Now, the next thing I have to do is to tell Edith," thought he, "for I have kept her in suspense long enough."

It was only the next afternoon when he was informed there were two ladies in the reception room wishing to speak to him. On entering he had to laugh, when he beheld Mrs.

Jackson, and Edith who was holding a pleasant conversation with the former lady's husband.

"Oh! Hugh," said Edith, "why had you not told me about it?"

Pointing to Mr. Jackson he said: "He is responsible for everything."

The two ladies were conducted through the suite of rooms and pronounced them very attractive in every way, and Edith, stepping up by Hugh's side, took him by the hand and said: "A full-fledged attorney at law."

She could scarcely wait to reach home in order to impart the good news to her parents, but afterward learned they knew all about it, as Mr. Jackson and his wife had divulged the secret.

It was some few days after this, when Hugh had crossed the doorway of Justice Brown's office, that to be real frank, he felt a little shaky about the knees, as he stood in court and defended the little old lady who had called at his office some time ago.

He went at things with so much earnestness that Mr. Jackson had to force back a smile as he sat a trifle in the rear and nervously pulled at his gray stubby mustache. In speaking to Hugh about his first case he said: "Well, if you go at things in this manner you will not only be successful, but will make yourself look prematurely old." Nevertheless, Hugh had waded in that afternoon, got his feet wet, and really liked the sensation of the water.

Then, too, he had tried hard to make himself equal to the occasion, as he had noticed Mr. Melton's familiar face numbered among the spectators.

It was almost dusk when Mr. Melton reached home, and this was something out of the order of things for him to remain away from home so late that it had caused his wife and daughter much uneasiness.

"David," said his wife, "give an account of yourself, and where have you been this afternoon?"

"Well, that is an easy matter," stated the husband: "immediately after I left home I went to the stock yards; as you know, I sometimes get a little homesick feeling and I like to visit the yards in order to hear the hogs squeal, as it brings back to me the memory of 'Quiet Dale Farm'." Then continuing, he said: "I then went down town and heard Hugh in court with his first case and he spoke with so much ease and presence of mind that one would have thought him to be an old experienced lawyer, judging by his calm composure."

"I didn't disapprove of your going—only of not letting me know where you were," said Mrs. Melton, as she handed him a letter. Looking at it for a moment he said: "Oh! this is from Ray," and at the same time breaking the seal, eager to learn its contents as it had been some little time since he had had any communication from him.

There was a welcoming smile on his face, as he sat reflecting on the contents of Ray's letter and when he got up, walking over to his desk he said: "Really, I am glad."

"What news have you concerning Ray?" inquired his wife.

"Well," he said, removing his glasses from his eyes, and going over and seating himself near her, "do you know"—he began, while he turned his glasses over in his hands and with a pleasing twinkle in his eyes, "that Ray is soon to graduate, and then will be ready to take up the work of his

father. Mr. Carter and myself have been playing the part of the silent partners with him, for he being unable financially to finish his education we two gentlemen have assumed his obligations, and acted the part I trust of the good Samaritan.

"He states in his letter, he is going to be able to liquidate the indebtedness the coming year."

Their conversation was interrupted by a caller which proved to be none other than Hugh. It was gratifying to see Hugh and watch the expression on his face when Mr. Melton advanced, and extended his hand saying: "With a well-placed firm foundation, you believe in getting to the bottom of things in a satisfactory manner."

By this time the circulation was doing rapid work on Hugh's face, and relieving somehow, the pressure of Mr. Melton's hand and acknowledging the compliment, he took Edith by the arm and led her to the music room where she entertained him for a short time by singing some of his favorite old songs.

Suddenly, she paused abruptly and turning to him said: "I had another letter from Guy this afternoon and he is anxiously waiting for me to say when I am coming."

Drawing her over to his side in order that she might share part of his seat, he said: "I too, am anxiously waiting for you to set the date of your departure."

The June days had slipped away and now that July was upon them it brought hot, long days, that afforded an ideal opportunity for Edith to visit Yorkville, and thus spend her vacation at the dear old homestead.

After Hugh's call this evening it did not take her long to complete her arrangements for this visit.

Her trousseau consisted of many beautiful and attractive gowns as the compliance with requests to appear in public quite frequently necessitated the ownership of such gowns.

She carefully and thoughtfully selected some of her prettiest clothes, such as she thought would be needed on an occasion like this, and carefully laid them in her trunk.

"When may we expect your return?" asked the mother, as she and Edith stood in the hall waiting for her baggage to be transferred to the station.

"Oh! I can't say at present, as you know it has been a long time since I have enjoyed a ride with Black Beauty, and too, this will be my vacation."

As she waited at the station and was scanning the many unfamiliar faces as they surged to and fro, she suddenly caught a glimpse of Hugh who was trying to locate her, for it was almost time for the caller to announce her train.

"I thing we'd best hurry," said Hugh as he advanced, "for I am a little late and it is almost time for your train."

As she entered the train and Hugh assisted her in being comfortably located in a well-cushioned seat, she realized the full meaning of her journey as he hurriedly bade her good-bye and whispered something in her ear that caused her to laugh, as he left the train.

"It seems a long time since I saw you," said Guy, after the train had pulled up at the station, and Edith had made her way out of the sleeper at Yorkville.

"Yes, I think you are right," said Edith, as she crossed over to where Janet was standing, and said: "I am so glad to see both of you."

As they approached, the old home looked much the same with its profusion of flowers, that enhanced the beauty of its

surroundings, yet when Edith entered, she found the interior altogether changed.

Guy and Janet were comfortably and pleasantly located and the artistic hand of Janet in the arrangement, together with the beautiful new furniture gave the interior a very pleasing appearance.

Edith was a trifle disappointed in her visit, for after having been here a week she had found little time for riding and recreation of various ways on account of callers and requests to be entertained.

This was Thursday and she had just received word from Hugh that he would arrive at home Friday evening, and after reading his letter she seemed a little nervous, but this was not noticeable to any one except herself.

The whippoorwill sat on a maple bough swung to and fro by the gentle summer breeze and the bob-white perched on a near-by tree, called to its mate in some remote thicket, as the sounds of a car in the driveway announced Hugh's arrival the following evening.

"I wonder," she said slowly, as she gave a hurried glance at herself in the mirror of the dressing table, "if he has told anyone?"

Without further thoughts on the matter that was of so much vital importance, she hastily descended the stairs and went in the direction of voices.

"So you've come," said Edith, as she stretched forth her two hands to meet his, "and I've been wishing you would come early."

"Then you don't mind me calling you a little early," said Hugh.

"Of course I don't," was the response.

"I am glad to see you looking so well, Edith, and to know that your visit to the country has been so beneficial," said Hugh, as he followed her into the flower garden where Guy and Janet had preceded them by a few paces.

They spent only a short time here and after gathering a few flowers they then entered the car that had been left standing in the driveway and enjoyed a long pleasant drive, which took them by many old familiar places including Coleman's spring, that brought back many pleasant memories of the past and ere long, they were driving through the streets of Yorkville and suddenly parked their car in front of Hugh's home.

"Yes, I think you'll have to tell them," said Edith very softly, as he assisted her from the car.

"We hoped you'd come," said Mrs. Carter, as they stepped upon the porch where the family were sitting enjoying a little breeze that had just sprung up, and began to stir the leaves on the trees, and the honeysuckle vines that grew by the porch.

"It's a beautiful evening," said Edith, "and we could not resist the temptation of taking a drive."

"So this is how it happened, is it?" said Hugh's father, —"well, we are very glad to have you here."

They were all unconscious of the passing of the hours, for time simply flew and the hours went on, until Edith heard the little clock on the inside announce eleven o'clock P. M.

Jumping up, she said, "Oh Hugh, we must be going," and at once realizing the purpose of their call, she became instantly and intensely quiet.

It is really not possible to describe the occupants of the porch, but as Hugh arose he stepped over by Edith's side where the light from the hall threw its rays directly upon

them and with much ease and composure, he plunged instantly into the full details concerning their visit and finished by saying, "We'll be delighted to have you come."

"I see," said Mr. Carter; "this is somewhat sudden, yet not altogether as we have been expecting you to unsteady our nerves by some such performance as this, but," he added, as they bade them good night, "we'll endeavor to be on time."

The night was far spent when Edith closed her eyes to sleep as she had spent some time in writing a long letter home, also in taking an inventory of her gowns and finally laid to one side a pretty, dainty creation of white organdie and lace.

Long before the sounds of the morning stir could be heard she silently crept from her bed and noiselessly began collecting her belongings, which indicated her departure was near at hand.

"Edith, are you going to breakfast with us this morning?" asked Janet at the foot of the stairs.

"Oh yes, Janet; I will be down in a moment."

Summoning all her heroic courage for the trying ordeal she had to perform when she entered the breakfast room, she softly tripped down the stairs and soon seated herself at the table.

"Your house guest," she began, "is going to take a leave of absence this morning and it is her desire that you accompany her as far as Yorkville."

"She isn't giving us any reason for her abrupt departure," said Guy.

"Well, it is this: neither of us believe in formal affairs," said Edith, "and are decidedly in favor of a quiet little ceremony such as we would be pleased to have you witness at nine o'clock this morning."

There was scarcely another morsel of food swallowed by either of the trio, and the stillness of the occasion was broken by Guy when he said: "Edith, you have a whole circle of admiring friends who will be much disappointed when they learn of your marriage."

"It can't be helped," she replied, "as we both dislike publicity."

It was a beautiful morning and was exactly eight-thirty when Hugh headed his car into the driveway at Quiet Dale Farm, where a pretty, charming and talented bride awaited him.

"Oh! what a dream," said Hugh as he presented her with a long box, and hurriedly disengaging the contents they were soon on their way to Yorkville.

The church windows had been thrown open for some little time, and the soft summer breezes were being wafted to and fro through their openings, and the birds outside were trying to split their throats by pouring forth their morning songs when Mr. and Mrs. Carter and family, Guy and Janet entered and seated themselves, within a reasonable distance of the altar.

There was no vestige in sight of any living mortal except the minister's daughter who sat at the organ, leisurely looking over a piece of music.

Suddenly at the sound of an approaching car the organ sent forth its soft voluminous tones, as the minister came down the aisle closely followed by Hugh and Edith.

Although not witnessed by more than a half dozen people, yet it was one of the prettiest and most impressive ceremonies, and involved parties of more prominence than any that had taken place in Yorkville for many years.

After the blessing had been pronounced on the union of these two young lives, Hugh stooped and kissed his bride saying, "My wife, my life."

Two hours had scarcely elapsed, that included a pretty, dainty wedding breakfast, served at the Carter home, together with the call of many friends extending congratulations, until they were ready to start on their honeymoon, which would include a visit with the Walkers.

Before they took their departure, Hugh sent two messages to Chicago, one to Edith's parents and one to Mr. Jackson.

Message number one was as follows:

> We ask parental forgiveness and are indeed happy. Will write soon.
>
> Signed,
>
> Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Carter.

Message number two read like this:

> The great transaction done, I am Edith's and she is mine. Will be back in about two weeks ready for real business.
>
> Signed,
>
> Your Partner.

"There is a quiet road that finds
The little singing streams;
A road that reaches till it winds
Along the Hills of Dreams;
A road to hope to duty done,

And to that last clear call
Across the gates of setting sun—
God lets us tread them all.''

THE END

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